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EDWARD B. PARTRIDGE:

Yeats's "The Three Bushes" — Genesis and Structure

The sequence of "The Three Bushes" and its "attendant" songs is a parable whose aim is to make clear that human love can never be simply spiritual or simply physical. It tells of the love affair of a lady who, to preserve her own chastity, makes her maid lie with her lover without letting him know of the substitution. When the lover is killed, the lady dies. The maid faithfully takes care of their graves, confesses her guilt when dying, and is buried by an understanding priest beside the other two. Three rose bushes planted on the graves in time grow into one. Necessarily, in such a parable, the characters are generic, not individual. The man is a lover, any lover; the women, like Rachel and Leah, Eve and the Virgin, the harlot and the holy lady, represent the age-old opposition between body and soul, carnal love and spiritual love, nature and grace.

Only Vivienne Koch in her excellent analysis in *W. B. Yeats: The Tragic Phase* and T. R. Henn in his acute though too brief discussion in *The Lonely Tower* have given more than cursory attention to this interesting sequence, but neither has concentrated on two of its striking aspects—its curious place in Yeats's later emotional and artistic life, and its musical structure. The first of these is important because it reveals, with peculiar clarity, how Yeats found in these poems, as in so many others, "a poetical emotion to dissolve these passions." The second is important because it may reveal how this sequence can be read most rewardingly.

I

First, what were the passions, and how did he dissolve them? The basic story grew out of a ballad which Dorothy Wellesley was apparently working on when Yeats went to stay with her in June, 1936. While at Penns, he must have decided to write his own version of the story, perhaps in a kind of contest with his younger friend. He first mentions his own version in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley on June 22: "I add the chorus of my poem about the lady, the poet & the maid 'O my dear, O my dear.' "* (Later he changed the revealing "poet" to "lover.") In his very next letter to her he quotes some lines from a poem by W. J. Turner which "rends my heart." Turner's "The Word Made Flesh?" deals with the children of the spirit that an old man can have with a younger woman. The lines Yeats quotes are:

> But when a man is old, married & in despair
> Has slept with the bodies of many women;
> Then if he meet a woman whose lovelinesss
> Is young & yet troubled with power.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Terrible is the agony of an old man
> The agony of incommunicable power
> Holding his potency like a rocket that is full of stars.

Now we could say that this is simply one poet talking to another about a question of craftsmanship, and we should be close to a part of the truth because, even in his wildest moments, Yeats could be disconcertingly objective about technique. But something personal seems in back of his selection of just these lines to quote to a woman whose loveliness was perhaps, for him, "troubled with power." Dorothy Wellesley seems to have thought as much because, in her next letter, she writes a little slyly: "Turner's poem is very moving. But is it by Yeats or Turner?" (p. 72). A little later in their correspondence this question would have sounded like a jibe at his disturbing habit of revising the poems of other people—a habit that was to bother her too. But since she could scarcely mean that these diffuse lines were at all like Yeats's mature technique, she must be alluding to their content. Her question may be her delicate way of saying that she understands why this poem rends his heart. The day after sending her the lines

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* *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 71. After this a page number in the text will refer to this book.

of Turner, Yeats writes: "I think much of the most beautiful of Chinese lanthorns, your face" (p. 73). His next letter five days later ends with "Yours with love & affection," a closing he had never before used in a letter to her. The letters during this period of their friendship are full of much that two busy and thoughtful people would have to say to each other, but out on the edges of them stir incipiently difficult emotions—emotions that two less disciplined people might have allowed to become dangerous. How, one wonders, could "high up lady" and a poet who sings love songs dissolve such emotions?

When Dorothy Wellesley writes next, she mentions being at the tomb of the Black Prince and says, "I thought of and longed for you all the time" (p. 75). Yeats must have enjoyed this association of death, beauty, and longing. In this same letter she encloses a rough version of her song, which Yeats calls a masterpiece on first reading, but soon begins to tamper with. By July 1 he has finished his own ballad, which he sends to her about the middle of July, along with his second version of her own poem. In this letter he mentions that Lady Ottoline Morrell, who first brought them together, has come for a visit at Riversdale and that, like a hen who has just laid a very big white egg, she wants all the yard to know. "The egg was our friendship, which was not only 'important' to me & you but to my wife (this when she got George to herself for a moment) for I would be safe in your hands 'You were no minx'" (p. 81).

In his next letter to her the critic reasserts himself enough to write a frank letter calling her revisions bad (p. 87). A little sharp because a little hurt, she answers his criticism in 1, 2, 3 order. Realizing that she is hurt, Yeats carefully explains in his July 21 letter how he came to revise her ballad and ends his letter with this revealing passage: "Ah my dear how it added to my excitement when I remade that poem of yours to know it was your poem. I remade you and myself into a single being. We triumphed over each other and I thought of *The Turtle and the Phoenix*" (p. 90). By August 1 he has written a poem about her, "To D. W.," and on August 5 writes that even this poem should give the impression of holding down violence or madness—"down Hysterica passio." "We have all something within ourselves to batter down and get our power from this fighting . . . All depends on the completeness of the holding down, on the stirring of the beast underneath" (p. 94). The beast stirs in the remarkable erotic imagery of this apparently reserved and friendly poem—imagery which Yeats himself calls attention to: "The moon, the moonless night, the dark velvet, the sensual silence, the silent room and

the violent bright Furies" (pp. 94-95). When he comments further on the conflict in this poem, he says that it was not planned deliberately. "That conflict is deep in my subconsciousness, perhaps in everybody's. I dream of clear water, perhaps two or three times (the moon of the poem), then come erotic dreams. Then for weeks perhaps I write poetry with sex for theme. Then comes the reversal—it came when I was young with some dream or some vision between waking and sleep with a flame in it. Then for weeks I get a symbolism like that in my Byzantium poem or in 'To D. W.' with flame for theme" (p. 95). The end of his poem to her reveals his characteristic resolution of his conflict—if not hers.

> What climbs the stair?
> Nothing that common women ponder on
> If you are worth my hope! Neither Content
> Nor satisfied Conscience, but that great family
> Some ancient famous authors misrepresent,
> The Proud Furies each with her torch on high.
> (*Last Poems*, p. 21)

In other words she will not be like either the chambermaid (Content from physical fulfillment) or the lady (satisfied Conscience); she will be a poet, a harder, lonelier thing. In the poem, as in the relationship, the beast stirs underneath and may at times peer out ferociously, but the power comes from battering it down. The dreams, inevitably erotic given man's nature, are transmuted into art.

The beast more visibly stirs when they are together, of course. After visiting her at Penns in October, 1936, Yeats writes her, "O my dear I thank you for that spectacle of personified sunlight. I can never while I live forget your movement across the room just before I left, the movement made to draw attention to the boy in yourself" (p. 109). In his next letter to her he refers to "The first & last sense & the second mystery—the mystery that touches the genitals, a blurred touch through a curtain," and justifies his frankness by saying, "I have a longing to tell these things because our last talk has created a greater intimacy" (p. 110). This letter ends:

> Your friend, who feels so much more than friend,
> W. B. Yeats.
> Over my dressing table is a mirror in a slanting light where every morning I discover how old I am. 'O my dear, O my dear.'

In her answer to this letter she describes a dream which, to an outsider, seems obviously erotic. His interpretation of it is interesting, but antiseptic: Yeats, perhaps fortunately, was no Freudian in dream-analysis. He is, instead, quite himself when he explains what a child (of his, according to her) means in her dream. Quoting the first three lines of "The Lover's Song," "Bird sighs for the air," he writes: "does not one always beget . . . Not from the bird but the thought?" (p. 113). I suppose that this is his cryptic way of saying that he is the spiritual father of her dream child—he thought it into her consciousness. He seems aware, as she does not, that Turner's "The Word Made Flesh?" may have affected her dream and his interpretation. About a month later she is beset by strange dreams, in one of which she dreams that Byron's child, Allegra, is dying. She explains her dream by saying that both her own children are sick with flu, but does not explain why she, who was to associate Yeats with Byron, Shelley, and Keats in her lines composed at his grave, dreamt of the love child of a Romantic poet (p. 130).

Crossing her letter of November 12 has been another letter from him in which he writes six lines, later used as "The Lover's Song," trying to find "better words to explain what I meant by the touch from behind the curtain" (p. 112). A week later he sends her the Chambermaid's two songs, and a week after that justifies his use of the worm in "The Chambermaid's Second Song." Then follows this strange passage: "My dear, my dear—when you crossed the room with that boyish movement, it was no man who looked at you, it was the woman in me. It seems that I can make a woman express herself as never before. I have looked out of her eyes. I have shared her desire" (p. 118). Are we to infer from this passage that his somewhat epicene relationship with this (to him) "boyish" woman has given him an insight into a woman's nature that he never had before and that he finally reveals in his chambermaid songs? He comes back to this point in a later letter in which he says, "What makes your work so good is the masculine element allied to much feminine charm—your lines have the magnificent swing of your boyish body. I wish I could be a girl of nineteen for certain hours that I might feel it even more acutely" (p. 125). His postscript to this letter echoes the same idea: "Have you noticed that the Greek androgynous statue is always the woman in man, never the man in woman?" (p. 125).

One last suggestion about the genesis of this sequence. On December 17, 1937, Yeats sends Dorothy Wellesley a book about her "favorite poem"—"The Phoenix and the Turtle," and writes with

gleeful malice: "The Phoenix was it seems the Duchess of Bedford, and if you look up Donne's poem 'St. Lucy's Day,' a poem of great passion, I think you will be convinced, as I am, that to console herself, perhaps for the faithlessness of the Turtle, she had an affair with Donne" (p. 166). Donne's Lucy was, of course, a Countess, not a Duchess, but that may be an understandable mistake in a letter to Lady Gerald Wellesley, presumptive Duchess of Wellington. In this flight of Irish fancy about the real love affair back of the ideal, Yeats may be saying, most serious when most witty, "Shakespeare wrote only about ideal love; now the real truth of that affair was that they were both unfaithful. As for the real truth of love . . ." But he has already told her that in a parable which ends not with a threnos celebrating the spiritual union of the two lovers, but with a group of songs, one of which is that of the earthy chambermaid, celebrating the claims of the body (pp. 57, 90, 166). I mention his attitude toward "The Phoenix and the Turtle" because he seems to echo its diction in several significant places in this sequence.

But long before he has sent her this Christmas present, the intimate association of technical poetic problems, the creation of a set of poems, and a warm, latently passionate friendship between an attractive woman and a vehement old man have come to an end. In the two years he has to live, they are as close as ever, but to all appearances not in such dangerous water (or fire) as before. Yeats seems to have lived down, in his work on "The Three Bushes" as well as on her version of the story, "the agony of incommunicable power" by transforming it into art. Dorothy Wellesley, so thoroughly a poet herself, seems to have been quite aware of what was happening. In her memoirs she writes that Yeats, like all true poets, was always in love and, like any artist, fed on the events and the emotions of his own life that he might create from them "Forms more real than living man."*

II

Vivienne Koch is quite right in saying that a musical analogy is the best way to understand this sequence, but wrong, I think, in the analogy she chooses. She maintains that the narrative section is like the overture of an opera which presents the story, and that the songs are individual arias. I should suggest another analogy, at once less exact than hers and more complicated. Yeats offers a hint of this

* *Far Have I Travelled* (London, 1952), 162-165.

analogy when the Lady in her "Third Song" says that she may hear "A contrapuntal serpent hiss." "Contrapuntal," a surprising piece of metaphysical wit, draws one up short. One begins by asking why the serpent is contrapuntal, but ends by discovering that much else in the sequence is contrapuntal.

In contrapuntal music the chief interest lies in the interrelationship of the various strands that make up the texture. These strands can be independent rhythmical lines which are important only as they create a texture from interweaving (the "linear counterpoint" of sixteenth-century madrigals) or formalized melodies, each complete in itself, which play against each other (the "harmonic counterpoint" in the last movement of Mozart's Jupiter Symphony). The texture in either kind is an interweaving of distinct rhythms, as in a fugue, not a sewing together of separate movements, as in a sonata.

These distinctions, not too strictly taken, seem to me sometimes useful in literary analysis. *Counterpoint* can be no more than an analogy, of course, because words, phrases, and sentences can never be orchestrated polyphonically as sounds can be. Even the most contrapuntal of modern literary works, *Finnegans Wake,* still must be read as a succession of separate and not quite simultaneous words. Yet, as an analogy, *counterpoint* may be helpful in technical analysis. Balance and parallelism, whether used in so minor a way as a phrase or a sentence, or in so large a way as a scene or a plot line, are frequently used contrapuntally and can, at times, best be understood in terms of counterpoint. For instance, the combination of main plot and echo plot in many Elizabethan plays is often contrapuntal rather than simply lineal (to mix the metaphors). Just so, tropes which involve the interplay of tenor and vehicle—metaphor, irony, and wit, for example—are ways of creating the multiple movement which in music is called counterpoint.

Now for "The Three Bushes." The six songs are sung not merely against the main ballad stanza, but also against each other. At first glance they seem arranged in chronological order. "The Lover's Song" comes after the Lady's three songs and before the Chambermaid's two, one of which comes immediately after his song and the last sometime after his death. But Yeats has written these songs so cryptically that they can be heard sometimes as separate songs, sometimes as contrapuntal voices. "The Chambermaid's First Song" and "The Lover's Song" are nearly simultaneous, as the word "rest" implies; both are sung after the consummation of their love, "The Lover's Song" immediately after, the Chambermaid's a little while

after if "cold breast" indicates some subsiding of their passion. Originally Yeats had called this first song, "The Chambermaid's prayer before Dawn," but changed it, I think, to allow the reader to associate it more closely with "The Lover's Song."

The counterpoint of the Chambermaid's two songs is even subtler. Her second song was originally called "The Chambermaid's song after his death." And so it still can be read. But because Yeats made the title less explicit and echoed in this song words used in the previous one, we tend to associate them closely. The last two lines of "The Chambermaid's First Song"—"Pleasure has made him/Weak as a worm"—are modulated into the first two lines of her second song—"From pleasure of the bed,/Dull as a worm." Such echoes draw the two songs together and suggest that, as Robartes says in *A Vision,* the sleep following consummated love is the same as the sleep of death. The place of birth is our first burial vault; conception is celebrated by a dying; the posture of love is the posture of death. In short, the song can be read both as a celebration of love and as a requiem.

To call the Lady's songs First, Second, and Third would seem to suggest that each would be sung at a different time from the others and to deny their contrapuntal interweaving. Within the temporal confines of the story each of her songs would be sung at a different time. But Yeats, like Blake, would ask us to see these songs in the light of eternity, as timeless or simultaneous. The Lady turns around like a dumb beast in her love, prepares a bed for her lover and her maid, and lectures her maid on how to take love—simultaneously because endlessly. Of course, locked within time, she sings these three songs at different times and is not aware that they can be heard in any other way. But we, the listeners, can understand both kinds of "time"—conventional chronology and eternity. We can hear these songs, as none of the singers can, sung endlessly, the inevitable cries of the soul or the body or the heart of man. They are simultaneously individual and generic, eternally true because once profoundly felt.

Structurally, then, these two different versions—the narrative sung in the ballad and the songs arranged dramatically—are Yeats's way of emphasizing the different worlds in which man lives. The songs seem to allow us only separate and isolated views of the situation as seen from the points of view of three people, each locked in his own little prison of self and time. The narrative shows us the story apparently moving forward in time—such is the powerful illusoriness of time—but actually seen pityingly, almost coolly, as if by a god from above, from eternity. This eternal view is recurrently emphasized by

the observer who sighs, in tragic awareness of how this love will end, of how all loves always end, and all life, "O my dear, O my dear." (Incidentally, this refrain could be said, with startling effect, by one or the other of the characters. In the ninth stanza, for instance, the maid might say it for her two dears now dead. Also, the double refrain reminds one recurrently of the lover's double lady.) The structure embodies the two worlds man is constrained to live in—the world of time, the world of timelessness, both always present, both always real, each in its way illusory. Only if read as counterpoint, that is, as voices heard simultaneously, can the two worlds be seen as one world—this one, this terrible, beautiful only world we are given here, where all the antinomies are caught in a kind of gravitational balance, in every man's every living moment. The polyphonic music of "The Three Bushes" is one of Yeats's subtlest ways of embodying this joyful-cruel tension between contraries.

But more than the larger structure is contrapuntal. Actually counterpoint might well be the analogy for the minor elements of the poems—their sentence structure, their diction, their imagery, and even their rhymes. Each stanza in the ballad, and nearly every line in the songs sets up an ironic other reading, an under-song that sings against it. Sometimes the lines express the counterpoint directly, as in "A laughing, crying, sacred song,/A leching song"; sometimes, only indirectly, as in the Lady's words—"I can strew the sheet"—which evoke the image of the Lady taking the part of her maid in preparing the marriage bed, even as the maid is going to take her part in being the bride. Such ironic contrasts between the meaning of the words and some additional meaning that we gather from the context help to create the complex music of these apparently artless songs.

To show how the various kinds of verbal and rhetorical counterpoint work in the whole sequence, we might first concentrate on "The Lady's Third Song," the subtlest of all the songs. Here the inherent irony of the situation plays off against the understandable wistfulness of the Lady, the irony checking the sentimentality that might have grown out of the Lady's yearning, and the wistfulness softening the irony. When she calls her lover "true," she is certainly sensitive enough to see that he is true in one sense because he is not willingly or knowingly false, but that he is false, nevertheless, because she makes him so. "And he plays tunes between your feet" is remarkably evocative. It echoes the second line of "The Lady's Second Song"—"To lie between your feet"—which apparently had been itself an echo of a question the Chambermaid had asked: what sort of man am I going to lie

with? But the Lady, with all the reticence of the civilized aristocrat, spares herself the frank picture implied in "lie" by using a musical image. Freud would probably have called this a displacement upward to the hands or mouth, just as "between your feet" in line 2 may be a displacement downwards and, perhaps, "thigh" in line 11, a displacement to the side. The musical image is ironically fitting, of course, because the lover sighs his song, all too literally, between her feet.

With the next two lines we meet the central metaphysical counterpoint of the whole sequence or of all of Christian doctrine—that of body and soul. Here the Lady reveals both her extraordinary subtlety and her curious innocence. "Speak no evil of the soul" is a surprising touch because normally, in Christian society at least, evil is spoken of the body, not the soul. By itself this plea would imply an incredible ignorance of what lovers do when they meet—as though they sit around speaking evil of the soul—but the rest of the song shows that the Lady is not so naive as her reticent imagery suggests. She says that, as his "daylight lady," she knows "worse evil of the body." "Daylight lady" implies its counterpoint—the night lady who knows, as the Lady had kept herself from knowing, a certain kind of evil of the body. But the elliptical way she puts it implies that the evil she knows of the body by denying herself to her lover is worse than the evil the maid could know by not knowing his soul. ("He shall love your body/Untroubled by the soul.") Is she then learning that to starve the body in order to feed the soul is worse than to neglect the soul in order to feed the body its proper food? We, the chorus who sing "O my dear, O my dear," realize that true lovers never ask which is more blest, the soul that looks or the body that touches.

The complexity of this love split so profoundly by the dualism of body and soul works its way into the very sentence structure of the last six lines. The first arresting contrapuntal device is "either neither," a daring phrase that Yeats may have picked up from "The Phoenix and the Turtle":

> Reason, in itself confounded,
> Saw division grow together,
> To themselves yet either neither,
> Simple were so well compounded.

"The Three Bushes" answers this passage in two ways. First, it implies that, contrary to Shakespeare's poem, separate selves can never grow together, except in death, perhaps, and then only ideally; love can cram love's two divisions yet keep its substance whole only in a

love that does not deny either body or soul, as Phoenix and Lady deny their bodies. Second, in Shakespeare's poem simple beings are so well compounded by this miracle of spiritual love that an impossible thing happens: they grow into each other, yet neither becomes the other one—neither loses his self-hood. But Yeats uses "either neither" to show that when one denies either body or soul neither one alone is enough. We have two simultaneous ways of hearing the sentence: the Lady tells her maid that they can split his love till either one has enough—and neither. Both statements are true, in their separate ways; to love in this incomplete way is better than not to love at all, but to love so is to doom one's self never to have enough. Such honorable splitting may offer them the double lesson of love.

> That I may hear if we should kiss
> A contrapuntal serpent hiss,
> You, should hand explore a thigh,
> All the labouring heavens sigh.

Each may hear the other's music; each may sense the other's love. The serpent, that oldest of phallic images, will hiss in counterpoint to even a daylight kiss, reminding her, schooling her in the claims of the body. Just so, the maid may hear the claims of the soul even in the height of love. If the maid is pious enough to say (as I think she does) the refrain in "The Lady's Second Song"—"The Lord have mercy upon us"—she is presumably religious enough to hear the heavens sigh in the midst of her passion. "Sigh" reveals the full contrapuntal effects of recurrent imagery. Here it echoes its use in the ballad when the Lady heaves a sigh if the Chambermaid is sleepy during the day (the maid's daylight actions remind the daylight lady of her own lack of a life at night). And, in turn, it helps to give what T. R. Henn well calls the "depth and resonance" of the "sighs" in "The Lover's Song." Though the Chambermaid says, "What's left to sigh for" in her final song, we who stand above her join in the sighing refrain which occurs throughout her little history: "O my dear, O my dear." "Sigh" may also recall a previous Eve and another serpent who caused Nature to sigh through all her works (*Paradise Lost,* IX, 783). In these final four lines, then, the imagery and the structure of the lines emphasize in the most poetic way possible, by thought, word, and deed, that body and soul cannot be separated in love because, as with two cones, the apex of each in the other's base, each dies the other's life, lives the other's death. The cruel, nourishing

antinomy remains, at once creating and destroying unity of being: without a body, no soul; without a soul, no body.

The same point is made by another use of countrapuntal structure in "The Lover's Song." T. R. Henn has written of "the symmetry of construction" which draws *mind* and *nest* together. He might have extended this comment to the whole poem, which is built on the chief rhetorical device of counterpoint—parallelism. *Bird, thought,* and *seed* —all sigh, nearly simultaneously in time and eternally outside of time, for what they have not—air, anywhere, the womb. All are rangers, destined to drive endlessly on to an end that is only another beginning—consummation or sleep or death. Life is tragic before its beginning because even before it reaches the womb, even in its effort to reach the womb, "the seed sighs." All reach the same rest, which sinks on the three apparently much different homes of the bird, the thought, and the seed. The counterpoint of *mind, nest,* and *straining thighs* suggests some equivalence. The mind is the nest of thoughts; thoughts are the birds of the mind; and straining thighs, the mystery that touches the genitals, "the brute blood of the air"—in short, primal desire—are the nest of all that man becomes. Here as in "Leda and the Swan" future generations wait on the fortuitous conjunction of roving seed and willing egg—the first, the last, the universal comedy.

"The Chambermaid's Second Song" is within itself contrapuntal, each of the worm similes counterpointing the line directly before and the line directly after, and the last returning, in the endless cycle of death, birth, pleasure, death, to the first line again. The worm, the traditional symbol of death, is associated here with sleeping man, limp phallus, fleeing spirit, and dead body. Man turns into worm because of love, because of death. The death begins in the midst of love: strange night has come, partly because two strangers meet in a wordless embrace, partly because such a night is the emblem of the death that awaits to embrace us all. With God's love (rather than woman's love, as we should expect) we seem in the realm of death even at the moment of sweetest life. When except in the hands of God are we "Out of all harm?" When Yeats first wrote this song, he had two lines—"A shadow has gone to the dead/Thin as a worm" —that made too abrupt a shift from the womb to the tomb. Later he cut these lines out, allowing the reader to see some analogy between the rod whose butting head has lost its life, and the spirit that has fled (after the Lover had suffered the grotesquely comic touch of falling on his head). Before Yeats completely cut out these lines, he changed the first to read—"A shadow among the dew"—but may have felt

that "dew," in this erotic context, was too ludicrously physiological. The reduction to three lines, each with its contrapuntal refrain, brings back in this "summing up," as Yeats called it, the three characters, here generalized as pleasure of the bed (the Chambermaid, the body), the phallic image (the lover, the male principle), and the spirit (the Lady, the soul). The Lover is caught between the other two, and all are held in a tension that only death can break. Yeats's own comments on this song are, as always, illuminating. After Dorothy Wellesley had objected to the worm, he answered that "its repulsiveness is right" and that the imagery and its adjectives "All suggest her detachment, her 'cold breast,' her mother-like prayer" (p. 118). This describes beautifully not merely the mood of the last song, but also the mood of the end of the ballad where one sorrows and rejoices in the same thing. The apparent end of the sequence and the real end harmonize.

The three bushes are one. Though apparently independent enough to be seen as three, they are finally woven together so closely that one cannot tell from which the rose came, even as, in contrapuntal music, we can distinguish the separate voices only at moments, and hear continually the woven texture of them all: one piece of music, one rose. Only counterpoint can do justice to this strange love affair in which each singer is, to some extent, independent of the others and ignorant of some vital fact about the others. The Lady knows her lover during the day; the Chambermaid, at night. The Lover knows both without knowing that he knows both; he is most ignorant of what he is most sure. The contrapuntal songs bring out, with chilling brevity, the isolation of even lovers from each other. Each singer sings alone. "The tragedy of sexual intercourse," Yeats once said, "is the perpetual virginity of the soul." Just after the orgasm we hear the body singing alone; the soul remains mute or sings its own song, still virginal. Counterpoint, in short, is the best way of simultaneously getting at the independence of the various singers—and their interdependence: "stranger with stranger." As in a fugue, the interest is cumulative—the voices mingle and contrast with one another, the tension mounts as the voices increase from the folk voice to the three singers. Such cumulative interest saves the sequence from the peculiar anti-climax of ending on the Chambermaid's frank songs, just as the polyphonic music in another contrapuntal work ends with Molly Bloom joining her voice to the many other voices of Dublin.

"'A laughing, crying, sacred song,/A leching song,' they said"—and so they are, all of them, to the very end. The laughter begins

with the lechery, the lechery with the sacredness; this is a tale taken from the Abbé Michel de Bourdeille (Mike the Pimp?), telling a comic story about the old bed trick. The tears and the passion echo each other, even as "thigh" rhymes with "sigh," and "kiss" with "hiss." The sequence illustrates Santayana's celebrated aphorism: "Everything in nature is lyrical in its ideal essence, tragic in its fate, and comic in its existence." All of life is here, the sacred and the profane, the animal and the angelic, life cramming all of life's divisions, yet keeping its substance whole. And the substance is kept whole in this sequence, as in Yeats's imaginative and ordered vision of life—itself the quintessence of counterpoint—because he neither denies the antinomies nor ceases the endless search for some means of solving them.

JASCHA KESSLER:

Primogeniture

The old man is tired. The insurance men
who sold him life with policies are dead.
He paid them out; he gathers interest now,
And scrawls his memoirs in the blank ledger.

There were women. Their bones fill his gray bed;
he thinks he has them yet like ghosts whose breath
is soft as his. All his snows have melted
in the same sun each year. He does not sleep.

He learned what there was to learn, left doubt room,
even reached this uninhabited coast:
what were limits to him? But I'm his child,
I'll pay my own way, thanks. I'll bury him.

Headline: VAMPIRE KILLER OF SIX BUILDS INSANITY CASE

> "By the heart we are wise, by the brain we feel, by the liver we love."—Bartolomeus Anglicus

By the heart we are wise, choosing this calm
of eunuchs in single beds, as if bars
were safety, dream act, men women, women null
who sleep alone. Is endurance wisdom?

By the brain we feel such imaginings,
these that flash from screens, random probables
of flesh graceless as lust only desires
in naked skulls. Who thinks of desire?

By the liver we love, and shall pattern
our blood by this palate, frozen color
bought today, eaten sometime, tasted never
though we live long. Can such tongues speak, my dears?

Apparition

O white one diving
do not run from
the water's edge
to thicket thorns

The human rider
on the far shore
longs for your white flash
and flesh-tossed water.

TED HUGHES:

The Little Boys and the Seasons

One came out of the wood. "What a bit of a girl,"
The small boys cried, "to drive my elder brother daft,
Tossing her petticoats under the bushes. O we know,
We know all about you: there's a story.
Well, we don't want your tinny birds with their noise,
And we don't want your soppy flowers with their smells,
And you can just take all that make-up off our garden,
And stop giving the animals ideas with your eyes."
And she cried a cloud and all the children ran in.

One came out of the garden. A great woman.
The small boys muttered: "This one's not much either.
She keeps my dad out till too late at night.
You can't get through the bushes for her great bosom
And her sweaty arms round you wherever you go.
The way she wears the sun is just gypsy.
And look how she leaves grownups lying about."
Then they all sat down to stare her out with eyes
Hot as fever from hostility.

One came over the hill, bullying the wind,
Dragging the trees out of each other's arms, swearing
At first so that the children could hardly believe it. No one
Believed the children when they clapped he had come.
The weathercock would have crowed, but was in his hand,
The sun was in his haversack with hares,
Pheasants and singing birds all silent. Whereon
Parents pointed warningly to barometers.
But the small boys said: "Wait till his friend gets here."

Who came out of the sea, overturning the horses,
The hard captain, uniform over the hedges,
Drilling the air till it was threadbare, stamping
Up and down the fields with the nails in his boots

Till the cobbles of the fields were iron as nails.
Birds stood so stiff to attention it was death.
The sun was broken up for sabres. O he was a rough one.
And the little boys cried: "Hurrah for the Jolly Roger,"
And ran out, merry as apples, to shoot each other
On landscapes of his icelocked battleships.

Billet-Doux

Here is the magniloquent truth—
His twelve bright brass bands
Diverted down mouseholes—
Walking the town with his head high
And naked as his breath.

I have looked far enough
If now I have found one who does
Not—hold that "not" to the light—
(When I walk about in my blood and the air
Beside her) sweeten smiles, peep, cough,

Who sees straight through bogeyman,
The crammed cafes, the ten thousand
Books packed end to end, even my gross bulk,
To the fiery star coming for the eye itself,
And while she can grabs of them what she can.

Love you I do not say I do or might either.
I come to you enforcedly—
Love's a spoiled appetite for some delicacy—
I am driven to your bed and four walls
From bottomlessly breaking night—

If, dispropertied as I am
By the constellations staring me to less
Than what cold, rain and wind neglect,
I do not hold you closer and harder than love
By a desperation, show me no home.

CLINTON SEELEY:

The Game of War

I guess it was old General Red who decided we was going to be the attackers. Anyhow, it was planned right in the beginning of the campaign. The enemy occupied this hill right across the lake. We could see them, day after day, working their asses off building this breastwork.

They cut down old pine trees and lugged them to the edge of the hill. Then they dug some of the logs in and built this breastwork, criss-crossing the logs and filling in the spaces with mud. From where we were, it looked like it was strong enough to stop a .105 shell. But they kept right on working at it, anyway.

Nearly every afternoon, Red would go down to the edge of the lake and look across at the hill. He would stand there, wearing his Marlon Brando jacket and his cycle cap pushed back on his head, just looking. And when they was still building on this breastwork, he would make the survey officer put the new part on the map. Then Red would go back off to headquarters, and two or three of the captains would sit around with him while they gassed off about what was going on.

Once somebody said, "What in hell they working like that for?"

General Red heard him, and he said, "Soldier, that's good for discipline."

Red believed in discipline. If I'd heard him say it once, I'd heard him say it a million times: "That's good for discipline." Most of us regular raiders believed Red knew what he was talking about. Anyway, if they didn't believe it, there wasn't one would have the guts to say so.

It must have been a system of discipline that Red used when we started working on the landing craft. We got these rafts built, after working like hell all through July. They was strong and big enough to carry all four regiments complete with supplies. Now we got them all finished and poled them out on the lake. Red and his squaw rowed around in his own little boat. One of the guys stole it from the pavilion down at the other end of the lake. Anyway, Red was out there standing up in his boat and his squaw was rowing his ass off. And we saw Red put one hand on his chin like he does when he thinks, and then he yelled, "Back to camp!"

When we got the rafts poled back to camp, Red called all the captains together and they went off to headquarters and had a conference. The next damn thing you know, they came back, and gave us this plan about how we had to fix the front shields so they'd fall down when we hit the beach.

It was sort of a heartbreaking thing to have to do in that heat. We had to take the whole damn front shields off and then rig up this rope that could be cut so the front would fall down just like regular landing craft.

The second day we was working on ours, a bunch of us guys was sitting around shooting the bull, and Red came wandering down and said, "What in hell you guys doing?"

Somebody said, "We're taking a break, sir."

"Back to work," Red bellowed.

And when our captain stood up and said something about the heat and how hard we'd been working all morning, Red yelled, "Hot, hell! Don't you know work is good for discipline, Captain?"

We got the landing craft done, and then Red detailed our regiment to fix his boat up. We figured Red just never forgot how we was sitting around like that on our butts when we was supposed to be working on the landing craft. Red never forgot anything: that's one thing you could be sure of.

One of the guys had to swipe a can of tar from the pavilion, and then we spent nearly one whole day caulking the seams of Red's boat.

We finally got the boat done, and then we made this trial run out on the lake. Red got all dressed up again in his good black jacket and his cycle cap and gloves, and he looked mighty fine, standing up in the bow of his boat. He had his squaw and one of his aides rowing around the rafts while we poled them out. It was kind of awkward poling out in the deep water and the rafts kept trying to go sideways.

Red was right in close to our boat when he yelled out, "Get that craft straight. What you think those fronts are for? Think they're to keep your asses safe?" Someone made the mistake of laughing.

"Captain, remember that man. I want him punished," Red said.

We was all quiet after that. You didn't fool around any in Red's army, I can tell you. As I heard Red say a thousand or more times, "Discipline is the thing that makes victories." He heard that in some movie; I'd heard it too.

It was nearly the middle of August when we were working on the last bit of preparations. Four men had been detailed to get the

chow, because, as Red said, "We don't want to stop for nothing, not for nothing, once we start to attack. I want you guys to understand that. If the chow runs out, we ain't stopping. Not for nothing, we ain't stopping. Get it?" No one said a word, so I guess Red knew we all got it.

If there was one thing about Red you could rely on, it was his word, especially when it came to something like sticking out a three-day assault on the enemy. There wasn't one of us didn't know that. And all of us knew we would have to be there, and that once it started, there wouldn't be any going home nights or anything, no matter what. There wasn't one of us that wouldn't rather have our old man belt us than to chicken out on Red. When the time for the attack got closer, we was all trying to find out just when it would be, so's we could cook up a story about a camping trip or something. Red wouldn't give out the information. "The enemy might find out. That stuff's top secret," was all he would say.

One afternoon, the guys from the chow detail came back into camp with two whole bolognas, a half case of beans, about six loaves of bread, all swiped by Teddie from his mother's restaurant. And they got other stuff too, like cigarettes and cigars that Paul and Little Red, Red's brother, had lifted from some places around town. We got the water jugs full, the ammunition all loaded on the rafts. When we had all this done, Red called a general meeting at headquarters.

Headquarters was really our central fort. We guys had built it the year before. Red wasn't our leader then. He took over just after the thing was finished. It was a funny thing, too: the way he just walked into camp one day, wearing a black leather cycle jacket and those big old engineer boots and carrying that little .22 target pistol. Little Red was walking behind him. He just walked up to Pete, who was our leader then, and says, "I'm taking this outfit over."

Before Pete had a chance to say much, Red pulled out his little .22 and stood there with his feet wide apart and said, "I hear any objections?"

No one made a sound, not even Pete. In fact, Pete sort of crawled out of camp and never did show up again. He never even came back for any of his stuff. It wouldn't have done him much good, because Red used what he wanted and the rest he just gave away to the captains. Everybody agreed Red was a pretty tough guy and seemed to know what he was doing.

Red made the old fort his headquarters. He made us guys put up the barricade around the whole shack, and then we made a door

out of young birch trees that worked on pulleys and opened just like a castle drawbridge that you see in those Robert Taylor movies. Red used the big room for his "H. Q." as he called it, and he took the little room for him and his squaw. His squaw fixed it up pretty good too, with a mattress and some old army blankets and a table and all. Red had a big old mirror he found on the dump, and he tacked up his whole collection of Marlon Brando pictures on it. He kept all his valuable stuff there, like his two cycle jackets and his pair of engineer boots and the pair of paratrooper boots that were too big for him. But he always wore those paratrooper boots on campaigns. In fact, Red just lived at headquarters, night and day.

There wasn't many of us guys that could get to spend more than a night or two at camp. Except two of the captains and Red. Even Little Red had to go home three or four nights a week.

Red kept some of the old captains when he took over, but he demoted two of them and made new ones in their places. Red used to say, "I make captains from soldiers that are natural leaders, and soldiers that don't have to worry about their time."

The regular captains got all kinds of privileges, like living in lean-tos at headquarters and having squaws. But Red had to approve all regular squaws. None of the lieutenants were allowed to have squaws, and they couldn't stay at headquarters unless they was asked to by Red.

Anyway, this afternoon, we was all sitting around headquarters, and Red was passing out a butt each from the new supplies. He was just about down to his briefing; in fact, he'd said, "Officers and Men . . ." and something else, when the guard at the front entrance gave a blow on the alarm bugle that was kept hanging on a pole by the drawbridge.

When we all piled out to see what was going on, Joe Johnson the sentry was pointing and we looked and saw this boy running like hell through the woods. Somebody yelled, "A spy," and we all took off after him.

Two of our guys got him when he fell over a rock. They brought him back to camp and we could see from way off in the woods that it was little Billy Mead from the Western Army. When they got him to the parade ground, about six of the guys held him while another tied his hands behind him. By the time they marched into headquarters, Red and his squaw had the place all set up. The packing case that Red used as a desk was moved to the center, and there was Red: sitting with his aide on one side of him and his squaw on the other.

Billy was scared half to death, you could see that. He was sort of shaking all over, and his teeth was chattering. Then all of us guys crowded into headquarters to get a better look. Finally, Red yelled, "Quiet!" and there wasn't a sound.

"What's your name?" Red asked.

"You know my name," Billy said. But you could see he didn't mean to say it. You could tell by the way he looked. Then all of us knew, even before Red raised that old braided riding crop and hit Billy across the face, what was coming.

"Are you a soldier or a crumb?" Red asked.

"A soldier," Billy mumbled.

"If you're a soldier, what's your name?" Red said. He was still holding that riding crop, flipping it against the top of the packing case, and Billy couldn't keep his eyes off it.

Finally, Billy said, so low you could hardly hear him, "Mead, Bill, Serial Number 801, from the Western Army."

Then Red's arm went up and we heard the whip hitting Billy across the kisser again. And Red yelled, "Forget something, soldier?"

Billy was so scared now he couldn't even talk. He started breathing hard, and he kept looking at Red. And then Red lifted his arm again, and Billy finally said, "Sir."

"What's your rank?"

"Corporal." Then he added, "Sir."

"Corporal, you are a spy. You are in enemy territory, and you are out of uniform." Red liked to make speeches like this, and he always talked very slow when he was making them.

Well, you could see Billy wasn't feeling too good about the whole thing, especially about being caught spying. Finally, he said, "No, sir, I'm not a spy."

"Where's your uniform band?" Red asked.

"It broke. It's in my pocket, and it broke." He sort of saw Red lifting the whip again, and added, "In my pocket, *sir*."

"Look in his pocket," Red said to the guard.

The guard poked around in Billy's pocket and pulled out the green arm band of the Western Army and held it up. Even before he spoke, we could all see that the arm band wasn't busted. And I guess we all looked at Billy then. Billy was standing between the guards, his head hanging down looking at the ground.

"This is a very special crime. You know what that is, soldier?"

"No, sir."

"That means you have committed one of the three serious crimes under our treaty, and it also means I don't have to hold a court-

martial. Do you admit you was a spy?" Red said.

"It broke," was all Billy could say. And then Red let go with that whip again, and this time it cut into Billy's cheek and there was a little line of blood where the skin was busted. And then Billy said, "Sir," but it was too late.

"Do you like the idea of a choice of punishments?" Red asked.

"Yes, sir." Billy yelled the sir.

Red leaned across the crate. "Tell me, was you ever a squaw in your outfit?"

"No. No, I never was. I don't want to be a squaw," Billy said.

"They brand squaws in your army, don't they?" Red asked.

"Yes."

"Take his pants down and look at his ass," Red said.

Billy fought all the time they undid his belt. He tried to kick the guard, but it was a foolish thing to do because his hands were tied and there just wasn't any use to try and fight. Then one of the guards busted him in the ribs. Billy sort of whimpered, and then his pants were down. We all crowded around and there it was, a little tiny "o" scratched on the right cheek of his ass.

"Turn him around," Red yelled.

They turned him around and Red leaned over and took a look. Then he said, "You're a goddamn liar. You can't never be trusted for a soldier. All you're good for is to be a squaw. I'm giving you to my new captain. And because you're so unsoldierlike, I'm giving you the works." Then Red turned to the guards and said, "Give him ten rides on the pole and then brand him with *our* squaw sign."

I don't think Billy said a word then. They just led him out and he went without trying to fight or anything. You could see how scared he was and all. He kept looking from one to the other of us like maybe some of us would help him. But he didn't say a word when they took him down to the edge of the lake, untied his hands and brought his arms in front of him and tied them again. We all crowded around as they put him in Red's boat and rowed out to the edge of the pole and tied him to the end of it. Just standing there and waiting was bad enough for us: it must have been awful for old Billy. Finally they got him tied on the end of the pole and the boat shoved off.

Then the three guys started working the other end of the thing. They pulled the rope and Billy swung up in the air, dangling and kicking. He let out with an awful yell as he hit the water; it sounded like he said, "Please, sir."

They left him under for a long time. Then they jerked him up so fast that his body shot up into the air and his wrists seemed like they might snap off. He swung around for a long time and he yelled, which he should never have done, because they always leave you up longer if you yell. Billy shouldn't have been so goddamn stupid. When they let him down he was still yelling. The damn fool could have gotten himself drowned like that.

After they'd given Billy the ten rides, they rowed out again and took him off the end of the pole. They had to carry him up to headquarters.

Billy wasn't in too good a shape. He lay on the ground making funny noises and twitching, but most everybody acted like that when they were taken down from the pole. After a while, Billy suddenly raised up and looked all around. His eyes were wide open, but he looked like he couldn't see too good, and then he laid back down again and made a kinda moaning sound.

Our captain went in and called Red. When Red came out he had his jacket all zipped up and his cycle cap on and even his red arm band. We was all standing there waiting, and Red stood looking firm and like he was thinking, like he always does before he says something important.

Finally, he walked up to where Billy was laying and motioned for us all to come up closer. Red was sweating so much he had to take his cap off and wipe his forehead with a handkerchief, and then he took a long time putting his cap back on and adjusting it. I guess he must have been pretty hot with that leather jacket all zipped up like it was.

Finally he said, "You men in number four regiment done a good job with my boat. I'm giving this here prisoner to your captain for a squaw."

We all let out a hell of a yell, because it's an honor when your captain's honored. Red told us so about a million times.

"Call the surgeon and get to work on the prisoner. Remember, he gets a double cross because he's a prisoner," Red said.

Doc Andrews was all ready to get to work anyway. He just stepped out of the crowd. We'd always called him Doc. His old man was a vet in town, and Doc had some good equipment that he'd swiped from his old man's supplies. Anyway, he had an honest-to-God scalpel for branding. He wouldn't let no one else use it, not even the other surgeon.

When Doc was all ready, two of the guys went over to the prisoner

and started ripping his shirt off and pulling his pants down, while two other guys grabbed his wrists and two got ahold of his ankles. I guess Billy figured out what was going on, because first thing you know he started yelling his goddamn head off again, like "No, no, don't do it, I got the water ride—ain't that enough?" and a lot of crap like that.

Then Red took a couple of steps, stood there looking down at Billy, and lets him have a good swift kick with the toe of his paratrooper boots. Red never did like anyone yelling or crying.

"Turn him over and get to work on him. And don't forget to scratch out the old brand. We don't want any confusion; he belongs to us now," Red said.

When they turned Billy over, Doc Andrews bent down and started scratching out that little "o" on the cheek of Billy's ass. He was scraping away and doing a nice neat job, when old Billy let out with one hell of a yell and tried to pull away. He shouldn't have done that, because that scalpel went right into him, and then there was blood running all over the white of his can.

I guess the whole bunch of us were standing there waiting for Doc to start in again on Billy. I remember Little Red was standing right next to me. I think it was him that looked up and saw them first. I don't know for sure; maybe it wasn't. Maybe he didn't see nothing until the first shot when one of the guys just went limp and put his hand to his forehead and fell in a heap. Then something hit against Red's leather jacket. After that, there wasn't a sound for what seemed like a long time. Then all hell broke loose.

We'd been ambushed right in our camp. They were firing at us from everywhere. It was the goddamnest thing you ever saw. They was slinging rocks and hard green apples and shooting bee-bees.

When you turned one way, there they were. And there *we* were, with not one piece of goddamn ammunition or nothing. There was a bunch of our guys guarding the boats down by the lake. Red was the first one to think of giving a yell. One of our guys tried to get to the alarm bugle, but before he got there he got slugged with a piece of pipe and just folded up. In about two seconds they was all over, tearing us to pieces. There wasn't one damn thing we could do but use our fists. And fists weren't much good against all that slugging equipment they had on them.

They all seemed to know what they was about, because the minute they snatched Little Red they started backing off. When some of our guys tried to follow, they got pelted by guys with bee-bees that were

stationed in trees. It sure was one hell of a clever raid, you must agree.

I don't think Red realized they had his brother until one of the guys came back and said, "They slugged Little Red, they slugged him because he was fighting so goddamn hard, just like you would have done, Red."

"They took him?" Red asked them like he couldn't believe it. And the first thing he did then was to unzip his jacket, something he never did unless he was getting ready for action or was upset about something. When he really got excited, he would run that zipper up and down like crazy. Well, he did that a few times: ran that zipper up and down.

I wasn't going to admit I was standing by Little Red. I wasn't going to admit I saw them take him either. Knowing the way Red felt about his brother, I would have been a damn fool to open my mouth.

There was something wrong with Little Red's right foot. There were two toes missing and he walked with that one foot pointed in, sort of pigeon-toed like. He was a scrawny little kid, but he looked just like Red. They both had kinda dark red hair that was curly. They had the same big faces and little blue eyes, and their noses were kinda flat and broad. They had freckles all over their faces and necks. If they ever went without a shirt in the sun, they got awful sunburns. Little Red couldn't ever put up much of a fight and he never was detailed to anything. He just hung around. He was always quiet, and most of the guys said they liked him. But you never could count on that much, because what else could you say, knowing the way Red liked him. Little Red hadn't put up any fight at all when they took him. As a matter of fact, he had started to bawl. But I wasn't going to say a goddamn thing about that, either.

Red jumped up on a stump and yelled, "Load the barrage guns! Get your asses moving, we're attacking right now!"

There was a lot of yelling and excitement, like there always is before a battle. Guys laughing and yelling and calling the enemy everything they could think of in the cuss way.

We got the big sling shots mounted on the rafts and checked all the ammunition, and by the time we was ready it was getting dark.

The prisoner was tied up and put in Red's boat. He wasn't officially ours yet, Red said just before shoving off, so we had to take him with us.

There had been a lot of excitement when Red told us we were going to attack, but the minute we got in the boats, things were dif-

ferent. You couldn't hear a sound from the men, but you could feel the excitement. I'll bet every one of them felt just like I did: sort of all right inside, and hating to sit still and hating not talking, and yet I couldn't have moved or said a word if my goddamn life depended on it. It wasn't exactly as if you was nervous: it was something different. Every time you felt like that before a battle. I guess it was the idea of not knowing that made you feel that way. To tell you how serious and strange it was, someone let this fart and no one laughed.

By the time the rafts were half way across the lake, it was pitch dark. There were only a few stars in the sky, and the water was black and still and the only noise was the lap of it against the rafts. Right about in the middle of the lake, we run into this misty stuff like fog. It swirled up around us and you couldn't see the boat even. Every once in a while, we could hear the whispers of the men poling the boats as they kept in touch with each other. It made you shiver every time those guys pulled those poles out of the water. The noise was as strange as hell in all that dark quiet.

Then that mist lifted and there right before us was that black hill. It was blacker than the water and blacker than the sky. It stood out like something awful. I guess we all wanted to be some place else about then. You couldn't stop to think about things like that right then, though. Because you felt for your sling and your knife and your sapper, if you had one. You checked your bag of ammunition and you tried to keep your hands from sliming all up with sweat.

Then we saw that all along the top of that goddamn hill there was fires blazing away behind those breastworks.

The boats touched the shore and before we could land, Red gave the order to fire the barrage guns. The guys in charge turned the big pieces of two-by-four around that the guns were mounted on and pulled back the old inner tubes and somebody loaded them. They stood there holding them and finally Red gave the command to fire. The bombs sailed though the air with a fine soft whistle. But it was no damn good: they fell too short. Before they could load again, a sentry from the fort on the hill gave a yell. We heard them all talking up there. Once in a while, you could see one of them poke his head over the breastworks with those fires behind.

Red gave another command to fire, and they fired, and the shot was still too short. Red wasn't one to get too discouraged over any idea of his that hadn't panned out, so he gave the order to land and storm the hill. I thought about how it took us nearly a week to rig those damn barrage guns.

As we ran ashore, I guess we all felt this campaign wasn't going to go so good. It seemed to come from everywhere; the air was full of falling bombs. They landed all around us. Right in the first couple of minutes, three guys were knocked silly by some rocks. We tried to pull them behind a clump of trees, but they saw us from up on the hill and let us have another round from a whole battery of guns. They must have been practicing for a week on that landing area with those guns, because they sure worked.

We all ran into a clump of trees. One of the wounded guys they pulled in was hit pretty bad. A bomb had landed on the side of his kisser, and it looked like his cheek was all caved in. He was moaning and crawling around and then after a little while he started yelling his goddamn head off. Red just walked up to him, picked up his head, made a fist and swung it into his jaw. There was a funny kinda sound as Red's fist hit his jaw. Then the guy gave one long yell and Red smashed him again, and then he didn't yell no more: he was out cold.

Red sent out two men to scout around to see where we could break through. It seemed like sort of a silly thing to do, because we all knew they could move their men all over the top of that hill in no time at all. Anyway, I guess Red just wanted some time to think.

When the two guys came back, they told Red there were men all along the top. Who the hell couldn't have told him that? The only thing they said that was news, was that they had these fires going and old gallon oil cans over them. We all wondered what in hell was going on. The way Red was looking up at that hill, we knew he was wondering too.

Even as we was watching, you could see they was building more fires. Red told the captains to get their regiments ready. The little guys with the guidons were put out in front next to the captains and then Red yelled, "Attack!"

All of us moved out together, screaming and yelling and running. It was a little confusing at first because I couldn't find our company banner and then I saw it and got in the pack. The second we came out of that clump of trees, they let us have it with everything they had. Stuff landed all around us and four of our guys were hit and fell and didn't get up. But we kept going. Finally we reached the bottom of the bank. We stopped there for a second to catch our breath.

I looked around and saw Red with the center group. They was still running for the bank and they was really getting the hell peppered out of them with rocks and paper-bag bombs and all. A lot of those center guys were hurt in that run, but they kept on going, I

guess because Red was leading them. Finally, they reached the bank and everything was quiet again. Then we heard Red give the yell to storm the banks, and we started up.

We started up, but we didn't get very far. They leaned over the top and started rolling down big rocks and all kinds of junk on top of us, and it was tricky business to keep from getting smashed in the kisser with one of those rolling boulders. Our captain was about halfway up when he got hit right in the head, and he let go and rolled back down to the bottom.

It seemed to happen all at once. When our men saw our captain laying there, they just turned and ran back to those trees. Me and two other guys helped the captain up and got him back with us. The other flank finally retreated with us.

We stayed in those trees, quiet as could be, and watched Red and his men trying to climb up the center position. They were getting awful treatment, with all those rocks and bee-bee shots and all. I guess they must have had most of their guns right there in the center. Then the awful thing happened, and we knew why they had built those fires on the hill.

First of all, they stopped rolling down rocks on Red and the men. Our guys made a little headway. But from where we were, we suddenly saw, all along the top of the center of the bank, men leaning over. Then all together they let loose with buckets of boiling water.

There wasn't a noise, not a single sound for a minute, and then there was the most awful screaming I ever heard. Our men just dropped whatever they had been carrying and ran back toward the trees. Red was the last of all, and he was cussing them and yelling all kinds of things to make them stop retreating, but they didn't stop.

Then one of the guys that got hit with that boiling water just crumpled up and lay down there on the battle field. As Red ran past him, he yelled at him to get up. But the guy just lay there, and Red swore a couple of times at him.

Some of the guys were burned bad. You couldn't see the burns at first, but one guy had gotten hit on the whole side of his face: it was pink and getting pinker all the time, and then it got bright red. He lay on the ground putting his hand almost up to his face, but not quite touching it, and then he started screaming.

All the time, Red was storming around calling the captains everything he could think of.

"You're chickenshit bastards, you're lousy goddamn chickenshits. None of youse are gonna be captains. You ain't going be nothing.

Chickenshits! Chickenshits!" He said that a few more times, and his face was all red from yelling and straining, and his right hand was all red from the boiling water.

Then somebody said something about getting the guy that was hurt and laying out there.

Red was his old self for a minute. He stood very solemn like, looking at the guy crawling around, and then he said, "You can't sacrifice an army for one man." He ran that zipper up and down a couple of times and then he added, "That's the chances you take in a war." Nobody said any more about going after the guy.

We heard it all at once. There was a great big hullabaloo going on in the center of the bank. We crept to the edge of the trees because we could see a bunch of the enemy standing on the crest of the hill. They stood there, plain as anything, with that orange light behind them. We couldn't make out what they were doing at first. Then we saw them raising something in the air. It was two big poles. When they raised them up a little more we saw what was fastened on them.

Stretched between the poles, tied hand and foot, was a soldier. His head was hanging down on his chest and he just hung there limp. Everyone knew who it was. No one said a word except Red.

"You guys see that? That's my little brother. You see that? You see what they're doing to my little brother? You chickenshits going to stay here and leave my little brother hanging up there like that? Come on, let's get him down!" Red started running toward the center of the bank, and we followed.

Red was halfway there when he stopped and stood with his legs apart, his hands on his hips, and then he unzipped his jacket and put his hands on his hips again and told the guy next to him to go back and get the prisoner. We couldn't figure it out: the enemy hadn't even fired on us. Our guys went back and got the prisoner and brought him up to Red. They still didn't fire.

Red's voice bellowed across the valley. "I want to trade prisoners!"

One of the enemy came close to the edge of the bank. He was wearing a motorcycle jacket just like Red's, so we figured he must be the general.

Red yelled again, "I want to exchange prisoners."

The guy yelled back, "Who you wanna exchange?"

"Our prisoner for your prisoner," Red said.

"We'll exchange our prisoner for you," the general yelled.

"You're off your rocker," Red yelled.

"It's no deal, huh?" the general said.

"No deal, goddamnit," Red said.

Then the enemy general raised his left arm and three or four guys went up to Little Red and we saw they had sticks with live coals glowing, and one of them put his coal on Little Red's bare foot and Little Red's head snapped up off his chest and he made a terrible crying noise, and I thought I heard him say, "Help me, Red, help me." Anyway, it was something like that.

"Let's get him down," Red yelled, and we all started running for the center of the bank, but they were ready for us. It was something to remember, the way they shot into us with their guns and all. When the first ones of us got to the bank, they let loose with their buckets of boiling water again. When they did that our whole army just turned around and headed back as fast as we could.

"Stop, you bastards," Red yelled. "Stop, you yellow sonsofbitches."

We stopped for a minute. Red was walking around the men that had fallen and finally he came across Billy, the prisoner. The other men got up and headed for us, and there was only Red standing there with Billy. Red was yelling for them to turn Little Red loose or he'd let Billy have it. We all stood there and watched, because they'd stopped firing at us again. Red kept yelling, and then one of those guys went up to Little Red with one of those sticks of live coals and we heard Little Red screaming.

Then we heard Red yell, "If you don't want your lousy goddamn prisoner, I don't either." He unzipped his jacket and held the little .22 pistol in his hand. Then we heard a shot, and then another shot. And then we saw little Billy fall to the ground, and Red stood over him holding that pistol in his hand, looking down at him.

We backed away, all of us. We turned and started running for the boats. We got in the boats and somebody got in Red's boat and we pulled them off the shore. When we looked back, we saw Red still standing there with Billy laying in front of him and Red waving that pistol around. From all sides of the bank, we saw the enemy.

They didn't even yell or anything. They didn't make any noise at all. They just sort of eased themselves over the bank. Red finally noticed that we were all gone and started yelling for us to come back and fight. But we kept poling those boats out onto the lake.

Soon they were all around Red, one great big circle, and Red kept yelling for us to come back. The circle got smaller and smaller. They all had pieces of iron pipes and bee-bees and bayonets, and they finally closed in on him in one tight little dot on that big field of sand.

And the enemy didn't make a noise. The only thing we heard was Red yelling for help a few times, and then awful cries, and then nothing at all. The last thing we saw was a tight little mob of them standing around where Red had been.

Maybe we should have gone back to help him, but as I heard Red say a thousand times, if he said it once, "You can't sacrifice a whole army for one man," and Red was the best damn general we ever had.

ROBERT PACK:

Apocalypse

The final hour is come, the hand of death
Has touched the world, and we whisper to each other
Here it is, another second ends us.
Shall there be fire first, even the fish
Burned back into the rock, and afterward
The cold all-covering sea and cold carved moon
And dispassionate stars shining quietly
Where no tree sheds a shadow on the moss?
Here it is, another second ends us,
But we do not know, do not believe the words
Our own lips speak, do not believe our nerves
That will not let us sleep, the crankiness
Of friends, the violence of dreams. The hare
Still dreads the snapping twig, porcupines
Bristle at the sudden wind, dazed moose
Are stamping through the woods while overhead
The geese are honking and the marsh is muddy
From their turbulence. A second more—
Is it not now? Has not the poison finger
Turned the ripe fruit black, the crouching fire
Sprung up as not before, and water swollen
Like a bloated fish?—A second more! Not yet?
And now I know there cannot ever be
The soft repose of hopelessness
But only this uncertainty.

JACQUES PRÉVERT:

Three Poems from 'Paroles'

Translated by Suzi Gablik

Glory

Coiffed with a diadem of thorns
Heels covered with spurs
All naked beneath her ermine cloak
The bearded lady enters the drawing room
I am magnanimity
I give lessons in diction

Lessons in edification in claudification in prediction in malediction in persecution in subtraction in multiplication in benediction in crucifixion in moralization in mobilization in distinction in mutilation in self-destruction and in imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ with the complete program of the evening and photographs of all the great men who have acted in the play and as a premium I give the key to the monkey-code published under the auspices of a famous national anthropoid

And also the manual of the perfect non-com
The expurgated Kamasoutra
And the complete and official list
Of all the unclaimed lots
And also a catechism of perseverance
And a dozen bottles of mineral water
With the special little key
That uncorks them.

The Worry Birds

Rain of feathers feathers of rain
She who loved you is no more
What do you want of me birds
Feathers of rain rain of feathers
Since you are no longer I no longer know

I no longer know where I'm at
Rain of feathers feathers of rain
I no longer know what to do
Shroud of rain rain of soot
Is it possible that never again
Feathers of soot . . . Outside swallows away with you
Leave your nests . . . Eh? What? This is not the season for traveling?
I don't dare leave this room swallows of the morning
Be off swallows of the evening . . . Where? Eh? Stay then
I shall go away
Feathers of soot soot of feathers I shall go away nowhere
and then a bit of everywhere
Stay here birds of despair
Stay here . . . Make yourselves at home.

Into My House

Into my house you will come
Besides it is not my house
I don't know whose it is
One day I entered just like that
No one was there
Only red spices hanging from the white wall
I stayed a long time in this house
No one came
But every day and every day
I waited for you

I was doing nothing
That is to say nothing serious
Sometimes in the morning
I let out animal cries
I shouted like an ass
With all my strength
And that made me happy
And then I played with my feet
They are very intelligent the feet
They take you far away
When you wish to go far away

And then when you do not want to go out
They stay there they keep you company
And when there is music they dance
One cannot dance without them
One must be stupid as man is so often
To say things as stupid
As "stupid as a foot" "gay as a lark"
The lark is not gay
He is only gay when he is gay
And sad when he is sad or neither gay nor sad
Does anyone know what a skylark is
Besides he doesn't really call himself that
It is man who has called him that
Skylark skylark skylark skylark

What strange things names are
Martin Hugo—Victor for first name
Bonaparte—Napoleon for first name
Why like this and not like that
A herd of bonapartes is passing through the desert
The emperor's name is Dromedary
He has a race cash and a horse register
In the distance gallops a man who has only three first names
He is called Tim-Tam-Tom and has no last name
A little farther yet there is it doesn't matter who
Much farther yet there is it doesn't matter what
Then too what does all that matter all that

Into my house you will come
I think of other things but I think only of that
And when you have entered my house
You will take off all your clothes
And you will stand there still and naked with your red mouth
Like the red spices hanging from the white wall
And then you'll lie down and I shall lie near you
Here
Into my house which is not my house you will come.

YEH TUNG:

The Kunming Ham

Mrs. Wu walks into Mrs. Yang's bedroom without knocking. They are such old friends now. Mrs. Yang has the flu and is nursing herself in bed under a yellow satin comforter surrounded by medicine bottles and crumpled tissues.

"How do you feel today?" asks Mrs. Wu as she sits on the bed.

"I'm much worse. You see I can barely talk. And bored. I've read all the novels here twice." She stops to blow her nose resoundingly into a tissue. "And hungry. Sometimes I think it's better to eat all the food in one great meal and to risk starving afterwards than to ration like this and be always hungry."

"Have you tasted the ham yet?"

"What ham?"

Mrs. Wu explains that yesterday they started on the pungent Kunming ham that had been aging in their storeroom. It is a large one, but after it there are only a few strings of sausages left. "I sent you a piece by Professor Chiao last night. The maid must have forgotten to tell you; I'll go see. It's the most marvelous ham I've ever tasted. Of course, in these days any meat is good meat."

These days are the days immediately following the Japanese invasion of Kowloon, a British colony on the coast of China. For fear of the invaders they dare not leave the building. There is no way to get food; all the preserved meat is divided precisely among the members of the family, and each piece held covetously in the mouth for as long as the flavor lasts. They have all become gluttons; food dominates all their thoughts and most of their actions. For the first time in their comfortable lives they are being subjected to the degradation of hunger.

They find it increasingly difficult to distinguish themselves from the rest of the hungry populace. The British had evacuated a few days before the Japanese entered; during this time Kowloon belonged to robbers. Packages were snatched from owners' hands in broad daylight and were snatched again by a third man and a fourth before the day ended. Apartments were looted while their occupants debated with the looters. Even the gigantic commercial warehouses were

methodically, openly emptied. While the robbers turned to loot one end of the warehouse, passersby would bless their luck and walk away with a few cans of meat from the other end.

During such a warehouse robbery Mr. Yang told their old maid-servant, Ah Yee, that such good fortune was not meant to be ignored. She was terrified, but under the assurance of her lawyer master that she would not be seen by the robbers if she went by a side door, she went. The Yangs beamed from the porch as they watched her run home with two sacks of rice slung over her shoulders. It was a whole day before her trembling stopped.

This is the rice Ah Yee is measuring as Mrs. Wu comes into the kitchen. Very carefully she scoops and levels the three cups prescribed for the evening meal.

"Ah Yee," Mrs. Wu calls and the old servant stands up with the last cup of rice still in her hand. "Where is the ham Professor Chiao brought last night?"

"He did not come last night; there is no ham."

"No ham? How can it be? I myself gave Professor Chiao a large piece to bring here." Then as though she regrets having implicated the Professor, she adds, "Perhaps he forgot." And she returns quickly to the bedroom.

"Your Ah Yee insists no ham was brought."

"She's absolutely honest," answers Mrs. Yang. "You don't know how much I appreciate her—my seventh servant this year. If she says there is no ham, then there isn't."

There follows a delicious silence as the two look at each other while consuming the same enticing thought. Can it be that Professor Chiao—? No! But who else? Can a piece of pungent Kunming ham just disappear? In the entire building never has a bad word been spoken about Professor Chiao though gossip about others reaches epidemic proportions. It is inconceivable. But how fascinating! Life has been so dull. It is almost worth the lost ham. They begin to laugh and laugh and laugh.

"It's too good! I can't believe it!" cries Mrs. Yang.

When Mrs. Wu is exhausted with laughter she suffers a second thought. "Really we shouldn't tell anyone. Poor Professor Chiao." Then in her sympathy she is reminded of another incident, though it is essentially very different. Since their house was bombed, the Liangs have come to live here with them. That means in the rationing of food they must count in three more mouths. Meals became so meager

that Mrs. Wu actually experienced stomach pains. Finally one night after everyone had gone to bed, she crept into the kitchen and furtively stuffed a salted egg down her throat. She has not told anyone. Now the thought of herself stealing her own egg from her own kitchen sends her again into laughter.

Mrs. Yang is saying "Oh, no, no, no. How can we keep this wonderful news to ourselves. It's unfair!"

"To be honest," she confesses, "it would kill me to have to contain this!" They laugh again at their weakness. But another doubt comes to Mrs. Wu. "Perhaps he simply forgot it. Took it home and left it there."

Mrs. Yang's face falls. She applies some nose drops and hangs her head over the edge of the bed. "It's possible," she admits in a cavernous voice.

"It's quite possible," repeats Mrs. Wu. "Maybe we'll never know." The mystery appeals to her but not to Mrs. Yang.

"Maybe," she says. Casting her eyes around the folds of satin, she searches for a thought, catches it, and cries out, "But why not invite him to dinner?"

"And serve ham? No, no, I couldn't do that. It's too cruel." But she admits that it is a brilliant idea.

"I suppose it wasn't cruel of him to steal my piece of Kunming ham?" They laugh and the matter is settled.

Mrs. Wu thinks to herself that the dinner means again less food for everyone but this is certainly worth it.

Everyone in the building finds out about it and comes—each with his own bowl of rice and pair of chopsticks. Mrs. Wu is obliged to offer them food; they are obliged to refuse. It is for the spectacle they have come. They are not normally so brazen and cruel; normally they would be embarrassed to come to such an affair. Normally Mrs. Wu would never have invited Professor Chiao; but normally Professor Chiao would not have stolen the ham.

They have been locked up in this square yellow building for two weeks with almost no contact with the outside. They do not know whether the war on the mainland has been lost yet. There is nothing to do but play bridge. They have no cigarettes and little food left. Outside of the few neighbors there is no one to speak to. All gossip is exhausted. Everyone knows the other's most intimate secrets. They are dying of boredom.

Occasionally a vendor comes with news and vegetables. At such times the entire building gathers to see him. How many people dare to conduct their business so openly these days? They are encouraged by the man's bold ways, but his stories frighten them out of their own plans of venturing from the building. The Japanese are putting up little shrines all over Kowloon. A young man and his wife from down the street passed by one without knowing enough to kowtow and were shot. Although neither of them died, both were wounded. Would any of the masters here be kind enough to take care of their baby? Sometimes when the vendor leaves, they wish that he had never come.

Now Professor Chiao's affair is welcomed as a more pleasant diversion. In the Wu's dining room the round table is laid with the dish of Kunming ham sliced paper thin and placed brazenly in the center giving off its tempting pungency. Though they are all convinced of his guilt, as the appointed time approaches, the excitement slowly drops. Mrs. Wu looks at the center dish and is ashamed of her own coarseness. A neighbor from the second floor makes an excuse and goes home; then another goes.

"Alice, take away the plate of ham," Edward Wu says loudly. She starts from the yellow wicker chair to do so, but it is too late. The Professor enters. She shakingly withdraws her foot.

Professor Chiao is a tall old man who bends his head to get in the door. His narrow skull is covered by thin grey hair brushed back from a high forehead. A small pointed beard juts from his chin. Unlike the other men, he is dressed in a traditional, dark silk Chinese robe with thin white wrists showing at the ends of the long sleeves. Smiling easily, he nods at everyone.

They look at him intensely—his eyes, lips, hands—for some sign. Nothing betrays him. "How is your illness, Mrs. Yang?" asks Professor Chiao, inclining his narrow head. Mrs. Yang is unable to answer; her husband glances at her accusingly as if to say, "Why do you slander this old scholar?"

Yet, he, as well as the others, knows that on the way down from the Yang's fourth floor apartment this afternoon Mrs. Wu had stopped at Professor Chiao's back door.

"Ah Ting," she called out to the Professor's man servant. "I think you have a dish that belongs to me. It's small and cream colored." The man went to look and found the dish with the left-over bits still on it in the Professor's study.

They are all seated around the table with the Professor in the seat of honor which is accorded him for his age. Edward Wu gestures for him to begin. The Professor's ivory chopsticks are poised for an instant just above the center dish; then they come down to close upon a thin slice of the fabulous ham. Mrs. Wu is astounded, utterly astounded as she watches him place it in his mouth. Her throat moves sympathetically and she chokes as he swallows the meat.

"Excellent, excellent, Mrs. Wu. There is nothing quite like Kunming ham, is there? Forgive me. I am a glutton and must take another slice." The ivory chopsticks swoop down to pick up another slice. There is nothing gluttonous about the delicate way he places the ham on his tongue and follows it with a small mouthful of rice. Mrs. Yang forgets to close her mouth. Mrs. Wu grips her bowl of steaming rice so tightly that her finger tips become white as the glazed china.

They all begin to eat—four slices of meat for each adult. The room is warmed by the steaming rice. Mrs. Wu notices that the Professor's temples are slightly wet. Otherwise he is like a delicate ancient vase that stands upon a teakwood pedestal.

Professor Chiao is the only son of an old Peking family. His scholarship became known with the publication of his first book, *The Four Concepts of Self,* written when he was eighteen. It is said that though he has lived his life in Peking, its streets remain strange to him. A friend left him once only a few houses from his home and he lost his way. A rickshaw finally carried him home after he had strayed beyond the city wall.

He was already an old man when the Japanese threatened this same wall and the university prepared to move into the interior. None wanted to stay behind in occupied Peking serving the enemy, yet there was much excited talk about the hazards of the journey. It was even said by one of the faculty wives that the new site for the campus was to be a deserted field on the property of a ferocious one-eyed warlord. Finally the Dean himself suggested that some of the older professors might serve their country better by continuing their work in some neutral place away from the adversities of the interior.

It was then, full of the extravagant patriotism of the time, that Professor Chiao made his answer to the Dean. Before a suddenly stilled crowd the tall form rose and told the fable of the coward who boasted of being three times the warrior his brother was—for hadn't he advanced a full fifteen steps before retreating while the

brother had advanced only five? The audience stood up to honor him, laughing and roaring the louder that the fifteen-steppers might hear, that they might be properly shamed for their planned retreat to neutrality.

But on that day when the committee came to see the Professor about the final plans, it was met at the door by his two sisters. Standing side by side in the doorway, the two women stopped the group with such admonishments that it was turned away nearly convinced that it had been saved from the folly of risking the country's finest intellect.

After that no one dared say more about the Professor's going, and he himself never mentioned it again. In the last hour before the city fell his sisters gave him the ticket to Kowloon, at the same time wiring Edward Wu, a young ex-colleague, to meet him there.

In their Kowloon apartment Mrs. Wu had put up a large colorful map of China upon which she pinpointed the battles with little red and black markers. Under this display the Professor as well as other neighbors faithfully gathered to discuss the war news. Who was to guess that Kowloon itself would ever come under the red-headed pin of Japanese occupation? No one thought that the invaders would be bold enough to attack a British crown colony; still less did they believe that once attacked the British would withdraw so quickly. The day after Mrs. Wu stuck the little battle flag upon Kowloon, she was forced to replace it with the red pin of defeat. After that her husband insisted that it would not do to own a large battle map of China while one was under Japanese occupation. She removed it from the bedroom wall but could not bring herself to burn it; instead she rolled it up and hung it down the sewage well with a string. This was her private contribution to the war effort and she promised herself that no amount of enemy torture could extract from her this secret.

Now the guests are rising from the table. One last slice of Kunming ham remains in the dish to indicate that there has been more than enough food. Because there hasn't, Mrs. Wu appreciates even more the gesture. They move to the front room where the card tables have been set up and prepare to forget seven-course meals and American cigarettes through fanatical bridge playing.

The cards are soft and frayed. As the Professor fans out his hand, those at his table see that he holds the card with the chipped corner —the queen of spades. They try to ignore the fact but it is impossible. Now that they know, they see ways of arriving at the knowledge from

the bidding. But would they have without first seeing the marked card? How should they play now? Anyway, one either plays from this knowledge, cheating the Professor, or one plays from the intentional delusion that the card is elsewhere, cheating oneself. Ah, if only the Japanese would not deprive them of new cards!

As they play, the children are put to bed; fresh tea is poured; darkness comes to Kowloon. Occasionally the smart clatter of cards is interrupted by loud laughter, a fist on the table, a bitter dispute, the scraping of chairs as players stand, stretch, and exchange partners. As the scores are being added up, Professor Chiao rises and walks toward the window for the sake of his legs. There is only a street, a small park, another street, and a beach between this yellow building and the black bay. Something attracts his attention.

"Ah." It is only a sigh, but everyone hears him. Crowding at the large glass windows, they strain their eyes to see through the dusk.

"They must have put it up while we were eating," says Mrs. Wu.

A shrine now stands at the street corner with two Japanese soldiers beside it. It is about five feet tall, made of wood and plastered with fluttering red paper.

"Look," cries Edward Wu, pointing directly below the window. A young Chinese woman approaches the shrine with her neck held stiffly. She stops just before the red wooden shrine as the soldiers gesture to her. One points to the ground stamping his foot; the other demonstrates by kowtowing. She stands still. They gesture more violently, but she seems to have no intention of kowtowing. Suddenly one soldier mocks a plunge at her with his bayonet. Immediately she drops to the ground and kowtows over and over again. She is still touching her forehead to the sidewalk when the soldier nudges her side with his boot. She rises and walks away with her body bent over.

There is nothing to say as they move back from what they have just seen.

"Goodnight. It was a fine meal. Thank you, thank you." The Professor takes his leave.

Their minds come back to Professor Chiao again as the door closes behind him. Each one waits for someone else to make the obvious statement that will begin the necessary discussion.

After a pause Mrs. Yang blows her nose in a tissue and obliges. "There was no sign, was there? Unbelievable! He's unbelievably thick-skinned."

"Not necessarily," says Mr. Yang. "A thick-skinned person feels nothing when caught in an immoral act, but Professor Chiao may not consider stealing immoral. It's not at all inconceivable. The Japanese come to rob China. Are they stopped by shame? Warehouses, apartments, stores are looted constantly. Are the robbers embarrassed? Why shouldn't the Professor eat ham when he's hungry? Of course, now I should take up my mammoth bone club, climb up to his cave, and eat him for my next dinner." They laugh at the lawyer's fancy and the guests begin to leave.

But Mrs. Yang is not satisfied and again begins the discussion. "But I can't believe he's really like that," she says to her husband. "It might be possible in a person of lower breeding—"

"That's precisely the point," says Edward Wu. "He's from a wealthy family. Things have always been delivered to him before he could ask for them. Then hunger, then ham. The first serious temptation in a man of some sixty years. He has no defenses and succumbs immediately."

"Tonight?" Mr. Yang asks as he tilts his head with academic interest.

"Ah, tonight," Edward Wu answers with great relish. "Education is a most flexible tool. We study psychology to find out why we hate our parents; sociology to place ourselves among other men; ethics to moralize our immorality. Now the good Professor has either blocked it out—forgotten entirely about the ham between last night and tonight, or he has justified his behavior. God knows what human minds are capable of when they've been trained." He lifts his foot on the footrest they brought with them from Peking. After a drink of tea, he continues, "Now Professor Chiao will go home and write a treatise on the immorality of man. That will purge him and he will then sleep the comfortable sleep of a good man." He slides down further in the yellow armchair and leans back comfortably.

Now Mrs. Wu, who has been unusually quiet, leans forward. "It's not unbelievable—what he did tonight—and he does not have to be immoral. That is—suppose he really feels terrible about the ham and then receives this outrageous invitation to dinner. He comes and sees it placed in the center of the table. What does he think of us? What kind of people are we? How would you act? Confess? Break down in front of all the vultures who've gathered here to see just that? Maybe you would offer to pay the Yangs back with three salted eggs? What can the man do but to act as if nothing's happened? The contempt that he must have for us now!"

"Ah, this is interesting," observes her husband. "Alice makes him out to be a great man; we are the culprits. The Kunming ham is all things to all men. I suppose we should go now and apologize to him for inviting him to dinner."

"Edward!" she cries and she is highly agitated. "Who is always talking about the immorality of man?"

The conversation is getting dangerous, but Mrs. Yang intercedes quickly. "Either way you look at it: his face has to be as thick as a bull's horn."

As the streetlights go on outside, Mrs. Wu moves to the window to watch. Each light casts a bright circle upon the sidewalk. "Look! Quick!" she cries as an old man in a dark robe steps into the first circle of light. He walks determinedly toward the next circle in the center of which stands the shrine. The space between lights is so dark that they do not see him again until he steps into the next bright circle. The small red shrine stands there ominously, flanked by the same Japanese guards.

Those standing behind the glass window are now able to see his profile; from the distance his silent figure looks more than ever like an ancient vase.

"Someone should stop him!" Mrs. Wu cries out. But immediately she realizes that no one will, no one dares.

"Don't be foolish," says her husband.

At first the soldiers are delayed by such a bold encounter, but as the Professor speaks, they move upon him. Under their blows he falls upon his knees but manages to keep his body upright. A bayonet pushes him in the back, but he does not bend. Each time it pushes harder until finally it slips in. The body arches against the thrust and then, as the blade is withdrawn, falls backward.

Only Mrs. Wu still remains at the window. The others have drawn back into the room and for a long time no one breaks the silence.

Finally Mr. Yang takes a breath and says softly, "Someone must write his family."

Mrs. Yang shakes her head over and over again murmuring, "I don't understand. I just don't understand."

After a while Edward Wu pours fresh tea into their cups and calls to his wife, "Alice, don't look any more. Come have some tea."

Mrs. Wu still stands there looking at her own image in the glass window. Her hair is not as black as it used to be. Dividing at the

center of her head, it sweeps down to a bun at the nape of her neck where it grazes the high collar of her Chinese dress. Her face is not pretty, but it is unusually regular, giving her a judicious appearance. Her prominent eyes look back into themselves. She feels herself swaying and the back of her head is terribly cold. She turns to face them and says, "I stole an egg from my own family three days ago. I am a thief. The thief of a salted egg." She looks at their faces; they are shocked but only at her strange manner of confession.

"Alice," says her husband. "You don't have to tell us. It's your own egg."

"I stole it! Can't you see I stole it? I am the lowly glutton that stole an egg from my own children!"

"Alice!" calls her husband as she runs out of the room. First she throws herself at the front door as if she wanted to break it down, but instead she turns around and flees to the bathroom. The door slams on her fingers. She cries. She sits on the toilet and cries over the fact that her pain is so trivial.

Her husband comes. He cleans her fingers, applies soothing medication, and bandages them. He leads her out of the bathroom.

DIANE DI PRIMA:

Poem

A face dreamed wisdom spells a boy on waking
I cross the pillow seas to nothing sure.

Seeking the easy touch that gentles flesh
I find cry babies baying at a clock
Eyes that turn inward nor reach out to mine.

Seeking the loving touch that holds all sin
I find the fingertips of puritans
That bruise the ripe and praise the greener fruit.

The only ripeness here's the ripe of fear.
More fear I find than I can exorcise.

JOHN PORTZ:

Idea and Symbol in Walter Van Tilburg Clark

All of the novels and short stories which Walter Van Tilburg Clark has so far produced are controlled by a single concept, or else deal with some phase or application of that concept. To Clark, the essence of man's existence consists of a contention between contrary energies, both within man and outside of him, which lead either toward unity or toward disunity. Man is the center of rival drives: love, pushing him toward living growth and oneness; and hate, propelling him toward death and disintegration. Clark's ethical judgments also are derived from this dichotomy of forces; whatever conduces to unity is good; whatever leads to disunity is evil. The effect of this contention is that man, whose inherent nature it is to find meanings and assign values, is obliged to search for a psychological maturity which, to some extent at least, will resolve this conflict. It is this search which forms the matrix of symbolism in Clark's work. In two works, *The Track of the Cat* and "The Watchful Gods," this conceptual basis appears fully developed and in allegorical clarity. In Clark's earlier novels, *The Ox-Bow Incident* and *The City of Trembling Leaves,* the schematization is less systematic.

The background for the life-or-death battle is Nature, the largest symbol, which includes all lesser symbols, the external agent moving impersonally, not benignly or malignantly, through its courses. In this huge hieroglyphic, each man finds his own nature mirrored, and thus his own moral values; and against Nature man proves himself, accepting the circumstances of his existence and proceeding toward unity, or else rebelling and falling the victim of his own obsessive desire to overcome a Nature which he misinterprets as evil in its active intentions toward him. In dealing with *The Track of the Cat,* most of the reviewers have seen the mountain lion as a symbol of evil natural forces bent on the destruction of the three Bridges brothers who one by one go forth to face the marauder. This interpretation somewhat misrepresents Clark's meaning. The cat is a smaller, more specific and objectivized symbol of the whole of Nature. Each of the characters in the novel sets his own value upon the cat. To Curt,

the cat and the snowstorm and Joe Sam, the old Piute Indian, are all aspects of the one hostile force seeking to destroy him. He sees this force as external to him, but it is actually his own disintegrative and evil self projected outward; by putting it outside of himself, he unconsciously assumes that he can better defy and fight it. To Arthur, an acceptive person who has resolved his conflicts, the cat is only a cat, a necessary phenomenon among the many in Nature, not to be pursued compulsively and not by any means symbolizing evil. To Joe Sam, the snow and the cougar represent the instrument of the gods of his defeated race, come back to take revenge upon the evil Curt, who symbolizes the rapacious white victors. Young Hal, the pivotal character, is sensitive to all these currents, and it is his choice of values that constitutes the chief problem in the novel. To all the characters, on one level or another, the cat represents the final and inescapable phase of Nature, death.

In searching for unity with inclusive, unjudging Nature, as all of Clark's admirable characters do, man comes closest to perceiving ultimate reality. Clark has a strong feeling for the mystery which lies behind existence. As a result, his characters are made to undergo certain mystical experiences with Nature which end in a feeling of oneness. The purpose of these experiences is, first, to synthesize, on the personal, subjective level, the intolerable contradiction of the life and death forces, and second, to assist in the search for maturity, which ordinarily proceeds in the relative world of event. Here is one such moment, taken from *The City of Trembling Leaves*:

> It was in this moment that I felt the birth of the world, and the deep, sad kinship of everything in it . . . It was revelation. It was on me without an idea. All that I had ever considered, argued and doubted about universal kinship, by bones and by atoms, by the seasons of fruiting and of death, by the immortality of generation, by the universes of space and of the grain of dust, was in that instant established and yet made a childish tinkering with notions . . . I was partitioned among all things, and free of the limits of any of them, or of time or of space. I felt so near the center of what is, the answer, that a little fear, half joy, raised the hair on my neck . . . and I was hungry for it [the answer] and afraid of it at the same time.

The foundation for Clark's religious attitudes is this subjective and intuitional experience whose exact quality transcends the power of logical analysis or verbal expression. It is a nonsocial experience,

undergone in isolation with Nature, and through it a man gains an insight more penetrating than that afforded by his intellect. It is fairly frequent. Arthur Bridges in *The Track of the Cat* has felt it "fifteen or twenty" times in a score of years, and each of these movements of introversion is more ineffable than the last and leads him further along the road to integration and an extra-moral acceptance of all forms of creation.

Clark's mythology, clothed in terms of the American West, is in its germinal idea much like that of the Genesis account: man must carry the load of guilt and death—that is, morality and finiteness. Immortality and the afterlife play no part in his stories or his conceptual assumptions; and in the lonely search for higher values, the church can be of no assistance. His position is most strongly put through the medium of the baleful figure of the mother in *The Track of the Cat.* Mrs. Bridges lives by her Bible and her harsh Calvinism. Protected by her bigotry, she imposes her moral pronouncements upon her children by the strength of her will. Her purpose is to hold her family together beneath her domination at all costs, and already she has wrecked the lives of her husband and daughter in the process of achieving her end. In more subjective ways, she has also twisted the lives of Curt, Arthur, and Hal. Her gentle opponent is "godless" Arthur, with whom Gwen Williams is symbolically allied.

> She [Gwen] wants what Arthur wanted [thinks Hal]. She couldn't say it in words, the way he could, maybe, but it's the same thing. She doesn't like the God that's in there with Mother now any more than he did. It's a God for the dead. Dad was right about that much, anyway.
>
> And hers is for life, he thought, looking down at the blue hood. It's the God of Life against the God of Death, that's what it is, he thought, and for a moment felt that he was almost into the big secret, the secret that was quiet in the middle of everything, and that if it only wouldn't go too fast, he'd really see what Arthur had meant.

In the end, the mother is defeated, her fundamental weakness is exposed, and her religion is revealed as one of the forces of hatred and disintegration. Clark employs, in the preceding quotation, the phrases "the God of life" and "the God of death" as a means of describing the central ambivalence of his ideas. These phrases also appear in *The City of Trembling Leaves,* and play a major part in the symbolic design of "The Watchful Gods," Clark's novelette. The

God of Life is always equated with the Christ of the New Testament; the God of Death, with the Jehova of the Old Testament.

Because Clark's central myth is the search for maturity, he portrays his characters and their culture at that critical juncture in time and space where the fight for maturity is either won or lost. Thus, the key word to an understanding of much of Clark's thought is *adolescence*. Hal Bridges in *The Track of the Cat,* Tim Hazard in *The City of Trembling Leaves,* and Buck in "The Watchful Gods" are all concerned with the problem of learning how to attain and accept adulthood. In a wider and more general sense, cities and countries also grapple with the perplexity of surmounting adolescence. Clark sets his novels and most of his short stories in Nevada, near the turn of the century. "The Watchful Gods," together with practically all of the short stories whose setting is not Nevada, has California as a background. The conquering of the frontier and the winning of the West are symbolic of a sort of brutal national childhood during which Americans went from shore to shore, as Arthur Bridges puts it, butchering and murdering the land. The Pacific coast was reached and conquered by 1900, at just about the time when the Nevada Comstock Lode petered out. All new land gone, Americans have stood for half a century at the crossroads of adolescence, hesitating between a suicidal butchering of each other and a reassessment of the values to be found in Nature and a return to the wellspring of origin.

All the elements of this national problem are displayed by means of contrasting characters in *The Track of the Cat.* Joe Sam, the seventy-year-old Piute, signifies the aboriginal inhabitant of the continent, who has lived close to Nature, is sympathetic with it, and has kept it inviolate. But he is bound in his relationship with Nature by his superstitious fear of it. Curt exemplifies the bestial American past, the exploiter of Nature who has turned inward against his own family, and sees Joe Sam as an ally of Nature. Joe Sam, the dead hand of the past, apparently supposes that through his witchcraft he can really call upon Nature to destroy Curt and consummate a symbolic racial vengeance against the whole white race. Yet his wiles are mere superstition, as Arthur knows, and not supernaturalism. It is not so much, therefore, that Joe Sam actually turns Nature (in the form of the panther and the snowstorm) against Curt, as that he and Curt unconsciously share the same superstitions. It is the weight of these superstitions, projected silently by the ancient survivor of

his race, together with Curt's own unrecognized sense of guilt at having despoiled Nature and his family, that secures "Nature's" revenge.

Arthur may be said to indicate the prophetic future of America—the visionary future of cooperation with Nature. Hal, nineteen years old, is America's present and near future. He is essentially good, and strives to break his adolescent attachments to Curt and his mother, in order to reach maturity in a marriage with Gwen. Both Arthur and Hal are friends of Joe Sam and indulge his superstitions. This is especially true of Arthur, perhaps because of the strain of mysticism which runs in him.

The City of Trembling Leaves is the biography of Reno's adolescence, as well as Tim Hazard's, although that adolescence is passed, not at the turn of the century, but during the 1920's and 30's. An unpublished first chapter [1] contains Clark's longest statement of opinions on many of the matters which have been mentioned. Here is to be found his discussion of the nature of the city, of which there are two kinds, the "moribund" and the "adolescent." An example of the former is San Francisco, rich, spoiled, and decadent, Curt's goal in *The Track of the Cat,* and symbolically connected with the father's debauched past. Reno, on the other hand, is a city of adolescence in the process of becoming, and it possesses potentialities for both good and evil, life and death. In spite of its divorce courts and gambling houses, it still retains some contact with Nature, symbolized by the trembling leaves of the aspen and the nearness of the mountains, which are Clark's chief symbol of life. Climbing them always engenders in Tim Hazard that experience of oneness which he is later able to accomplish in his musical art and his personal life. But most cosmopolitan areas are lost to Nature; man has hidden himself away in them, seeking a cowardly protection which they are unable to afford him. The city produces little that is good, and Clark is explicit and personal in his denunciation of the art and people emerging from it. To him, the moribund city is the most obvious token of disintegration in our culture.

A belief in individualism is an inevitable corollary of Clark's discarding the orthodox values of an industrialized city culture. Uncivilized civilization is the habitation of the mob, the "pack";

[1] The Library of Congress owns the early manuscript versions of both *The Track of the Cat* and *The City of Trembling Leaves.*

Nature is the home of the independent individual. This contrast reveals itself directly or indirectly in almost all of Clark's work, but perhaps most explicitly in "Why Don't You Look Where You're Going?" In this cartoon-like short story, a vast ocean liner, loaded with nameless people, is confronted in mid-ocean by a small sailing boat with a single occupant. A collision is narrowly averted and as the liner sweeps past him, the man shouts out the words which form the title and point of the story. In Clark's handling, this event attains, as the author says, "mythological proportions." The ship is described as a "white Utopian city"; that is, it is the symbol of modern civilization, so complicated a creation that those who are borne along in this Nature-conqueror no longer direct their own fate, and have sacrificed their power of choice and their independence. Their insufficient compensation is a lulling sense of comfortableness. The little man, shaking his fist indomitably at the mechanical monster, is his own master. Because he has remained close to Nature, he knows where he is going.

The City of Trembling Leaves treats this theme of individualism in many ways, but one of the most interesting is that revolving around Clark's theories concerning the nature of the artist. If Tim Hazard's experience is any criterion, the struggle to become an artist is a severe and unending one, and involves an assertion of one's uniqueness against the pull of the world. Like the man in the boat, the artist stays close to Nature. In the introductory chapter to the manuscript version, Clark says that the artist is a sort of perennial adolescent and, as such, lives always on the razor's edge between infinite discovery and finite failure.

> Never at any other time [as in adolescence] does it hurt so sweetly to be alive, and try to understand people, trees and time and so on. Before that everything counted too, but it was one at a time. In adolescence all things for the first time accumulate into one great and strange flavor of life, and yet must be examined and tasted singly, every damned one of them. Imagine that delectable, stupendous, agonizing and symphonic concentration upon obtaining a whole and bearable body out of ten million wounded parts. That doesn't happen again, either, except to the rare, continuous adolescents, the poets, artists, composers and broken hearted lovers. After that for most of us comes the defeated acceptance of multiplicity, and only the dull and dogged concentration upon clipping off, one at a time, any part we don't want to use right then, until, in our wise old age, we are reduced to trunkless and branchless stumps, congratulating ourselves that we've got nothing left the wind can

> break. Don't you ever believe these bony, love-sick for everything youngsters don't know what it's all about. Well, no, they don't, really. But they're closer to it than they ever were before, or ever will be again. They are, their very selves, unconscious multiplicity in search of a meaning.

The hazardous life of the artist has its compensations—as this passage implies—in the feeling that one has penetrated toward the dark mystery behind the forces of life and death, and that one has joined the current of creativity. The artist's search for understanding involves a return to Nature's principles, so that the unity of the artwork (and the artist's interior life) may be said to be an imperfect, but inspired, copy of the organic pattern of the universe itself.

Yet Nature of itself saves no one. It cannot be expected to work the character transformation which can be accomplished only from within. Arthur Bridges, in *The Track of the Cat,* has reached serenity because he has learned to accept rigors as inherent in life. Mutable Nature cannot grant that ultimate union, intimations of which man may experience mystically now and again. The essential condition of each human being remains that of a quite pragmatic struggle to believe in oneness and reach toward it as often as possible.

Clark has created three main characters by which to illustrate his central philosophy. All of the novels and most of the short stories contain one or more variations of these characters, all related in the root meaning of their existences. The first is the man who, having synthesized the elements of his own nature, acts as an influence toward oneness. The second is the hating man, the man of seeming courage, whose hidden fear rules his disorganized nature. These two, representing polar forces, struggle (often quite consciously) for the allegiance of the third character, an adolescent coming to manhood. His decisive taking of sides resolves the tension between the forces of life and death.

The first of these basic characters may be seen in Art Davies and, partly, in Art Croft, the narrator, in *The Ox-Bow Incident;* in Arthur Bridges of *The Track of the Cat;* in the first person narrator of "The Buck in the Hills"; and in Tad Manson of "The Fish Who Could Close His Eyes." It is not without significance that three of them (and Buck's younger brother in "The Watchful Gods") are named Arthur; the connotations of the name in our language suggest those qualities which are actually present within the men. In *The City of*

Trembling Leaves, Clark has called this type of person "St. Francis." This is an apt designation, for such men are deeply religious in their approach to Nature and exhibit a generalized affection for all things. Arthur Bridges, for example, is described as a "monk," a "prophet," a "medicine man," a "priest," and a "saint." These terms are applied to him with a sneer by his brother Curt, but they are more exact than Curt knows. The hood of Arthur's parka is called his "cowl," his "sanctuary"; and when he dies it is beneath "Cathedral Rock," originally called in the manuscript version "Castle Rock." A formation of the same shape, designated the "castle rock," appears also in *The City of Trembling Leaves* and "The Buck in the Hills." To it the St. Francis characters go in worship and in sacrifice. A related image is the mountain.

The most striking characteristic of the St. Francis man is his power of empathy, a power of identification with other forms of existence so unique in Arthur Bridges that, even at the moment of his death, when the mountain lion has launched itself out from the rock in his leap, the man can feel in his own side the wound which he sees, for a split second, in the belly of the animal.

Yet Arthur, the compassionate St. Francis man, is to some extent ineffectual, partly in the sacrificial manner of his death, and partly in his dealings with his family. His chief power at the ranch is as a passive example; he does not openly fight the depredations of Curt, but merely allows him to destroy himself. And through his quiet example he has already won over Grace, his sister, and eventually will win Hal. There is an implication—much more strongly put in the uncut manuscript version—that even the mother is beginning to see the hollowness of her own self-righteous, Old Testament religion of denial and deprivation, and to acknowledge the truth of Arthur's "heathen" remarks. But the St. Francis man is not actually a saint, of course, and sometimes he fails. Davies' attempt to halt the Ox-Bow lynching is futile and he ends in an agony of self-doubt. Art Croft, who may be considered an indistinct cross between the St. Francis and the adolescent types of character, is sympathetic with Davies; and all of the people who have doubts about the justice being done are drawn to him, until he exasperatedly asks why everyone wants to make him a "father confessor." From the beginning, he merely observes and reports, though sensitively and emotionally, and he does not attempt to stop the hanging. It might be suggested, perhaps, that the young Art Croft of Bridgers Wells, 1885, become the forty-one-

years-old Arthur Bridges of 1900, now passed through the fire and sure of his principles.

All the St. Francis men are "dreamers," and in varying degrees tend to forget the harsh realities of an everyday existence while fantasizing an ultimate unity of love and compassion. The slow-witted youth, Tad Manson, for example, is less a typical adolescent than a sort of natural. He is absorbed in his "dream" and "prayer" of union with the sea. In time he discovers that his powers of identification have misled him into projecting his own feelings into the fish he has tried to befriend. At the end of the story he feels more "murderer" than "saint."

This visionary and speculative tendency is the chief danger that awaits the St. Francis man. Arthur Bridges is reliving a summertime experience in which everything had come together "into the one big answer they had all been looking for, the answer that, like all good answers, was only a beginning of a bigger question . . ." when he rides into the shadow of the rock on which the panther awaits him. And earlier, upon awakening from a night dream which has clearly prophesied his nearing death, Arthur touches the log wall to reassure himself of his place in a world of practicality, and observes that, as the years have passed, he has become less and less able to discern the borderline between fact and reverie, between reality and fantasy.

Clark does not underestimate the impulses to disintegration which drive men into evil deeds. In *The Track of the Cat* the most compelling figure is Curt, disconcertingly short and crude in his address to life and people. Related is the father, who in his earlier days held the values which now are expressed through Curt. Mr. Bridges has lived long enough to see his false courage wind down into drunkenness and irresponsibility. In *The Ox-Bow Incident* the lynching mob represents this force for evil, here broken down into thirty different aspects of blind lust to kill and will to destruction. Chet in "The Buck in the Hills" is likewise a depredator against Nature. And in the nonhuman part of the universe, there is Hook, the Hawks' child, in one of Clark's best short stories, who fuses into one burning will his three hungers—flight, killing, and sex. Hook, however, has an excuse for his ungovernable rage that his human counterparts do not have: in obeying his wild nature, as he must, he has no power of choice and lives wholly within a structure of instincts, rather than of morals and reason.

Curt presumes that he is courageous and independent. He is a scoffer at weakness and superstition. But his actions are really conditioned by the people he thinks he dominates. Supposing himself the master, he is really the slave; his is the freedom of rebellion, which is no freedom at all. This is illustrated by his relationship with Joe Sam, whom he bullies unmercifully; yet at the test it is seen that Joe Sam's superstitious nonsense has worked itself deep into the soul, not of Arthur, as Curt has derisively claimed, but of Curt himself; and his superstitiousness is really another expression of that bone-deep terror through which he accomplishes the suicide he has always been running toward.

There are no mysteries left in Nature to stimulate a religious sense of curiosity and wonder in the angry man (as he may now be termed). And so there is no rapport possible between him and Nature. The Ox-Bow lynchers and Curt have to fight Nature's snowstorm every step of the way. Nature is the enemy to be pillaged, as Curt utilizes the ranch as a means of getting enough money to live in style in San Francisco. Although he makes fun of Arthur's dreams, he follows his own will-o'-the-wisps, and like his father before him, dreams of those rich strikes and Comstock Lodes which are no longer possible in 1900. He looks to the past, as Arthur looks to the future.

Nevertheless, this angry man possesses a practical vigor and ambitious energy which are lacking in the St. Francis character. In the area of material values, he is cunning and strong; Curt runs the ranch successfully, and as a hunter he is deadly. Yet in him it is, after all, a hunt for victims, and not that search which is in Arthur and Hal. If the impulses which direct this character's existence were to actuate the nations of mankind, the outcome would be that appalling end of the world which Clark prophesies in "The Portable Phonograph." Properly, then, Curt's color is black, and around him circle the related symbols of death and violence: the black panther of his imagining, "big as a horse"; Kentuck, his black stallion; his murderous rifle; and the flights of dark birds, signifying his fear.

At the focus of the opposing forces of creativity and destruction stands the third character, the adolescent, who weighs and balances from his point of choice and is the critical figure in Clark's philosophy. *The Ox-Bow Incident,* Clark's first and least symbolistic novel, is much more complex than its rapid style, overworked situation, and shallow genre would suggest. The energies of life and death are

rather ambiguously embodied in the characterizations. The force of evil is represented by the multiple "pack" (a figure which appears frequently in Clark's work), wherein each individual is driven by private motives to join the lynch mob, whose vacillation is finally swept away by Colonel Tetley and given a purpose and a direction. Art Croft's function as narrator prevents him from taking the side of good to which his nature seems to incline him, so that ambiguities are here as in the other important characterizations. Thus, although Croft detests Colonel Tetley and other members of the mob, he tags along lest the group become suspicious that he has been involved in the cattle rustling. He is trusted by Davies and Gerald Tetley, yet he does not vote with them to halt the hanging.

Young Tetley is the adolescent. He is caught between his father and dead mother in an unbearable oedipal triangle which he cannot escape from except by suicide. His mingled hatred, fear, and admiration for his father lead him to the cynical extremities which he expresses, specifically, in the form of contempt and hatred for himself, and generally, in relation to the whole human race. Nevertheless, when the decision to lynch or not comes to a vote, he sides with Davies and the good, in an act of rebellion against his father's evil. When this fails, he sentences himself.

After Gerald's death, Davies takes over the adolescent's function of untangling the mesh of good and evil. His process of self-justification progresses well until he asks himself the simple question of just why he had not taken along a gun with which to stop Colonel Tetley and the mob. The final disillusionment is the news of the suicide of the man whom both Gerald and he have regarded as the incarnation of amorality and animal hatred, Colonel Tetley. Paradoxically, the Colonel's suicide proves that even he has some remnants of that guilt feeling which implies a conscience and a sense of good. Panic-stricken but unsparing in his search for the truth about himself, Davies is then driven to admit that somewhere within himself he had always known that the mob could be stopped, with or without a gun.

Both Gerald and Davies fail to accept the responsibility which accompanies their position of choice. They succumb to the dangers of the St. Francis attitude, passivity and indecision. Their failure to act puts them in the wrong according to their own consciences. Strictly speaking, however, Gerald is from the beginning so far crushed that he is not really capable of engaging in any process of attaining adulthood. He is bereft of any real power of choosing, and in killing himself, surrenders the problem and bows to the death-

force within him. The real judgment thereafter lies with Davies, and he struggles hard to avoid his responsibility, as though good would take care of itself through mere talking, without action. His indecision is evidence of evil in him, then—a negative type of evil, but nevertheless evil. Good must be implemented with action in this world of relative values and pragmatic experience.[2]

Despite its subjectivity, *The City of Trembling Leaves* appears to be Clark's attempt to explain individual disunity on the basis of social pressures. Looked at thus, the book is an assertion of the rights of the one as against the injustices of the many. The principle of death is represented by the moribund city, with its multiplicities, its disharmonies, its fear of and estrangement from Nature. The social aggressions which induce Tim's difficulties, however, are not clarified, and Tim's struggle really seems to be almost completely internalized. Certainly this is suggested by Clark's subjective techniques, and by the fact that he does not offer instances of the specific means by which the city and society retard the evolution of Tim from the "jungle" of his childhood. On the contrary, Tim possesses most of the advantages of an upper-middle class rearing and education, and his acceptability within his society seems obvious. He has no need to rebel against society, and in fact, does not.

If, on the other hand, we expect to find the reasons for Tim's disunity in traumatic family relationships, we also meet problems. We see the symptoms of disunity in the form of Tim's anger, self-contempt, compulsive garrulity, the over-idealization of love—what might be summed up in Clark's phrase, "annihilation of self by shame." But the psychological origin of these emotions and actions is indistinct. What can be suggested is that the Hazard family is an adumbration of the Bridges family in *The Track of the Cat,* and that the same emotional problems are in control. There is the blustering, card-playing father, the self-sacrificing mother who holds the group together, the sister named Grace, the yellow-sweatered sweetheart, the pair of contrasting brothers—the younger, cynical and frightened; the older, a dreamer and mystic. "The Watchful Gods" also gives evidence of being a systematic reworking, in accordance with Clark's conceptual plan, of some of the early chapters from the life of Tim

[2] *The Ox-Bow Incident* was published in 1940, a date when the United States was failing in foreign affairs to implement its moral rightness with effective measures. The nature and quality of some of the dialogue suggests that the novel was intended as a commentary on this situation.

Hazard. In *The City of Trembling Leaves* and *The Track of the Cat* the psychological dynamics lie in the relationship between mother and son; in "The Watchful Gods" the important family relationship has shifted to that between father and son. These resemblances, however, should not be pushed too far, although they do suggest the germinative function of *The City of Trembling Leaves* in Clark's development. The book, indeed, leaves the impression that it was written from the author's accumulation of notebooks and therefore should be dated earlier than *The Ox-Bow Incident,* whose publication it actually followed.

In *The Track of the Cat* Hal's problem is to cast out the anger which is the curse he has inherited from his family, and which is signified by the "dancing furies" in the eyes of Curt and his mother. It is this anger—superficially rebellious—which represents his bondage to his mother's will and to Curt. He cannot approach Gwen on terms of equality until he is able to accept his mother without that oedipal anger which implies impotence. He is assisted in this purgation by his impulse to imitate Arthur in resting at "the quiet center of things."

A symbolic treatment of this problem is found in Hal's dream of the Valley of the Yosemite.[3] Here, in the omnipotent dream, beneath the waterfall graze milk-white animals in an Eden of unity and acceptance, the lion and the lamb together. This section of the dream probably represents a development of the dangerously visionary aspect of the St. Francis man. At all events, the paradise is shattered by the intrusion of Curt, and suddenly the happy valley changes into a blue jungle,[4] transferred by Hal's dreaming mind from his mother's figured blue bedspread within which Arthur's body now lies wrapped. At once, Hal awakens in deep fear. Asleep, he has retreated to an unattainable state of perfection unattractive in its cold unreality. And in its context in the novel, the vision is tantamount to a desire to return to a fairytale childhood which never had existed in actuality. By means of this mirage Hal expresses his wish to escape the responsibility of dealing with evil and death. Eventually, aided by three tangible experiences with oneness, and pushed more by circumstances, it

[3] An early version of this dream of the Yosemite Valley appears in *The City of Trembling Leaves.* Compare also with Tad Manson's "dream" of a oneness which is constantly being dashed by adult disbelief.

[4] "Jungle" is the term (along with "wilderness") which Clark used in *The City of Trembling Leaves* to describe the actual savage and primitive life of the child.

appears, than by his own volition, he threads his way between anger and mysticism, compulsion and inertia, to a sense of coming unity and maturity.

In "The Watchful Gods" Buck's coming to manhood involves the present of a .22 rifle from his father. The rifle, which he regards with both fascination and fear, leads him to a knowledge of death, evil, and the complex, tragic paradoxes of adult life. With it, he kills a young rabbit, and, while he is confusedly swept by multiple feelings, he is almost bitten by a venomous rattlesnake. He buries the rabbit and, as the story ends, is making a great effort to unify his impressions and to understand the consequences of his small action.

Buck lives in a world in which everything takes sides. The two opposing forces which supply the basic condition of his life are represented by the watchful gods, his immanent "guardians" who struggle for his allegiance. One set of gods constitutes the forces of light and good; these are the golden "sprites" peopling the sunlight, the blue sky, the air, the ocean, the gulls, the secret beach, the rabbit, and the deity of the cliff. These gods are splintered into innumerable shining parts, occupying the many objects of Nature in which Buck has taken delight. The antagonist is the black fog god, who is one, not many, and suggests evil and death. He is in control on Buck's foggy birthday. His chief associates are the rifle and the rattlesnake.[5] There is about the golden gods a certain vagueness and intangibility which makes the fog god easier to believe in.

Childhood has been for Buck a burningly solipsistic and omnipotent state in which he loses his personal identity in a pantheistic merging with the identities of the bright objects of the secret beach.

> Such ecstasy, which was to Buck the very proof of being alive and goal of living, invariably swept all being up into one golden, weightless suspension, leaving no important difference between the living and the dead, or the great and the small, or the past and the present and the future.

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[5] Minor symbols are numerous also: the forces of life are represented by the Tristram legend and certain other mythological stories, Janet Haley, the box of oil paints, St. Francis, various books, Buck's violin and music, the laughing god Poseidon lying along the distant headlands, and the Christ of the New Testament. Lesser symbols of death are the Old Testament Jehova, Buck's sister Evelyn, Toynbee's theory of history, and (doubtfully) the hawk. Some objects, such as his mother's piano and the Sir Walter Scott engravings, contain both elements; and still other objects have no significance for Buck at all. Most of these symbols appear in others of Clark's novels and short stories, and are used consistently.

This is a description of the mystical experience of oneness which has appeared in Clark's other stories. Occasionally experienced by adults, it is somewhat continuous in childhood, a time when a boy's nature is infinitely divided among the various parts of Nature. The change to adulthood involves a withdrawal from Nature. The childhood oneness is really union with other objects; the adult state is unity within oneself, separate from all other objects. Before killing the rabbit, Buck was composed of innumerable parts, each one emanating to a part of the Nature about him. He was infinitely divided yet joined with all external Nature into one. Now, through his act, these parts come back to him, making him one with himself, but at odds with Nature. Adulthood is aloneness; and this truth is apparent in Buck's being swept with loneliness after he has passed the threshold of adulthood. Attachment to and sympathy with all natural forms are exchanged for a separate, dark power which alienates man from all things. Only a rare adult—the child-like St. Francis person—is able to revive the innocent condition of empathy with all creation.

In this most subjectivistic of his writings, the author is right in stressing the cosmic quality of Buck's deed: ". . . the enormous, primal chaos engendered by his act slowly shrank and was reshaped toward reality." In terms of the boy's psyche, the basic constitution of the universe has altered, new divinities have entered and brought their fiats: Buck must now learn to deal with conscience, fear, sin, and death. He must now reconcile himself to temporality, to the fact that things have beginnings and endings, and especially to the fact of his own end, represented by his encounter with the rattlesnake. He must become aware of place, of the fact that all other things are outside of him and have an existence in substance apart from his substance. In growing up, Buck is obliged to move from a timeless, nonmoral paradise to a circumscribed existence of evaluation, judgment, and choice. He has changed "religion" into "self-sufficiency," and immortality into mortality. He has now become a hunter, and in doing so he has also become one of the hunted—hunted by "the single most important fact in the universe," death.

The .22 rifle is a symbol of masculinity as well as of death and the coming of age. The rifle has been the father's and in giving it to Buck, the father is, as it were, accompanying the son on the egoistical and aggressive experience of coming to manhood as well as adulthood. The experience involves killing, and the full meaning of such an experience is known only to males. Buck's mother cannot share in the

experience, and cannot understand the ritual and sacrificial significance to the male of the act of killing. All she can obscurely sense is that from this point on she has lost her son as her child. For that matter, even the father cannot really join the son during the actual deed; his sympathy arises from the fact that he too has had to go through his own version of the rite; the promise of a continuing ceremony lies in Buck's giving his wooden gun to his young brother, Arthur. Thus, with one act, Buck has assumed his sex, his adulthood, and his individuality.

Buck's pantheon is not confined, however, to the gods of light and darkness. These are important divinities, but only deputies to another "head-god" of whom Buck has at times been dimly aware. After he has barely escaped the lunge of the rattler, it suddenly occurs to him that the snake, allied with evil, has attacked him in revenge for his killing of the rabbit, the symbol of good.

> It followed that the powers of light and darkness were not wholly and always opposed to one another.
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> Buck, however, was unable to grasp so momentous a union all at once. It rather appeared to him, alone in the foggy ravine and struggling for his first hold of idea upon the feeling of unity, to have resulted from an absorbing victory for darkness.

The religious evolution through which Buck has gone is similar to that of the savage moving from pluralistic animism to a monotheistic transcendence. The new, "inconceivable" head-god includes in his nature both contrary, elemental energies, and yet operates beyond them, perhaps in the realm of the absolute. It seems to Buck that sometimes this new presence may have understanding of him and tolerance of his shortcomings, and that at other times the god is completely a stranger and not in the least interested in any one human being. He is, however, a god transcendent to Nature and he is a One which includes all multiplicities.

At the close of the story, the sunlight shines through the fog, a hopeful promise; and Buck knows that something new has begun within him. He looks down at his gaunt young body, with his legs covered by scratches, and is reminded of an image of the Christos in one of his father's books. Thus symbolically Buck has joined himself with suffering humanity and has assumed the burdened condition of man.

Nevertheless, the separateness of adult life is not without compen-

sation. Although the endless struggle which is man's lot is suggested by the repeated image of Buck as a fighter emerging from his corner, happiness is not thereby made impossible to Buck. His struggle will reward him with at least a partial choice among the forces playing upon him, and his eventual achievement will be a compromise: "a steady, happy aliveness that was just comfortably below ecstasy, and sometimes seemed to him even better than ecstasy, because it felt like a state that might become permanent."

Man's fate, according to Clark, has always been plagued by paradoxes which he is ultimately incapable of resolving. And today the difficulties are aggravated, for now the world of culture seems to have subjugated the world of Nature. Modern man has created a machine and a civilization whose significance is not known, and has lost that poetic imagination which is akin to the child and the mystic. Perhaps Clark would say that the ingenious human intellect is revolting against the deeper sources of the psyche; and it may be that something of this is expressed in the Professor's remark in "The Portable Phonograph": "We are the doddering remnants of a race of mechanical fools. I have saved what I love; the soul of what was good in us here; perhaps the new ones will make a strong enough beginning not to fall behind when they become clever."

The implications here are those of tragedy. Clark's view of man's dilemma, however, is not completed, partly because he has not as yet written a novel which minutely and centrally analyzes adulthood and especially adult love, and partly because he has not yet clarified the nature of that head-god toward a perception of whom Buck is moving. The archetypal myth which Clark has summoned up again and again is that of the adolescent at the turning point between youth and maturity; and the mystical experience which he undergoes from time to time suggests a release from those finite conditions which are the necessary basis for tragedy. A tragic protagonist should be at the axis of irreconcilable forces and gather them all within himself. Potentially, the adolescent is this figure in Clark's novels. But the theme of adolescence is not one that lends itself to tragedy, despite its poignancy. It is too indecisive and too uncommitted, and it does not ordinarily end in a death. Yet Clark's trend is toward tragedy. His work carries the recognition of the dignity of anguish, the essentially enigmatic quality of life and death, the notion that death is a prerequisite for rebirth; and his central concept comprehends the painful paradoxes of tragedy.